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EARLY ITALIAN LOVE STORIES

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EARLY ITALIAN LOVE STORIES.

EARLY ITALIAN LOVE STORIES.



The telling of the tales

EARLY ITALIAN LOVE STORIES

TAKEN FROM THE ORIGINALS

By UNA TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY J. FORD



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INTRODUCTION.

AN introduction to any reproduction in English guise of the love-stories of the early Italian novelists seems of itself to assume the form of an apologia. For to all those who are even superficially acquainted with the originals, it is evident that English language and English feeling offer no equivalents for the diction and no counterparts for the sentiment of the lost centuries of the Italian Renaissance "Novella."

Moreover, the semi-archaic English, which has been selected by the most competent modern scholars as the nearest approach to literal translation, has its serious demerit. To be unlike to-day is, it is true, a step towards being like yesterday. But though something is thus gained, the sense of spontaneity, the effect of the story told rather than of the story written, which constitutes an intrinsic charm of the Novellieri, is lost to the narrative. However masterly the use of Elizabethan word-phrases, epithets, and construction may be, the reader of the nineteenth century cannot divest himself of the knowledge that it is artificial, and with the critical consciousness that it is counterfeit comes the sense that it is laboured, and the illusion of ease becomes unattainable.

Yet it is not with language alone that the difficulty rests. The gulf between us and the old Italian fiction-writers is of life no less than of language. Outside their mere burlesques

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1

Boccaccio at his saddest—the sadness of a jester *par excellence* —and Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, author of the collection known as that of “Il Pecorone,” in one of the stories he puts into the mouth of the beautiful nun of Forlì, as according to her daily wont she meets the noble young Florentine (who for her sake has abjured the world), in the *parlatorio* of her convent beyond the Apennines. Introduction.

Masuccio Salernitano, author of the three following, belongs to the fifteenth century. As a prophet of judgment he stands alone amongst his fellows. His pen was of red-hot iron, welded primarily, by his own avowal, to shame the priests and the women of that gay, dissolute Neapolitan world into right living. Thus it is that while it is only by a reluctant concession to art that he allows the heroine-victim of the Leper House the meed of courage, or Veronica, the gentle falcon-keeper, the reward of her fidelity, it is with the full sincerity of hatred that he awards Madonna Laura the due penalty of her sin.

The story of the Love Ring, adapted from the version contained in the “Sei Giornate” of Sebastiano Erizzo, properly belongs to an earlier date. It is told by Petrarca in his “Epistolæ” and likewise appears in a slightly dissimilar form in the “Heimskringla Saga,” with Harold Haarfager and the Lapland woman Snoefrid for its central figures.

The two stories taken from Giraldi Cintio are included amongst those of his “Ecatommiti,” published c. 1565, a volume ill reputed as exemplifying the school of the “tragedies of blood.” From it were derived the plots of “Measure for Measure” and “Othello.” But many idylls, pathetic as that of Filotima, or gay and graceful as the story of Andria’s gallantry, are to be found in its pages.

Of Straparola’s two volumes of “Favole,” some eleven or more stories are fairy tales, already current nursery coin. Of

Introduc-
tion.

of a levity without restraint, the loves, hates, griefs, despairs and sins of their graver inventions lie, more often than not, outside the range of later-day experience—possibly beyond the pale of its sympathy. Theirs were the loves and hates of vehement and whole-hearted children overmastered by the passions of man and of womanhood, while, for better or for worse, our social decalogue was not their law, their evil was not our evil nor their good our good. A code and ideal of right-doing they possessed, their line of demarcation between the allowed and the forbidden, between innocence and guilt, is as sharply drawn and consistently observed, but it does not correspond with our moral boundaries, nor tally with our conventions.

But notwithstanding all that is lost in the re-telling, in a different language and at a different day, something remains, independent of both the old life and the old language, which the past has and can bestow even upon the unlettered readers of an alien country and an alien time, and that is the stories themselves, apart from their treatment and expression. Even retold their charm cannot, we are fain to hope, wholly evaporate. It is at all events possible to convey in some measure, by a simple recital of their contents, some idea of the positive genius for the picturesque in incident, episode, and surroundings, characteristic of the school to which they belong; of the blind intensity with which a single passion is painted, dominating and determining the living and dying of men and women of bygone generations; of the simple and undeviating directness of aim, good or evil, upon which the plots are constructed with such excellence of art that they seem a mere accident of instinct.

The stories here selected represent but one small section of the *Novelle*. Of the fourteenth century they represent

Boccaccio at his saddest—the sadness of a jester *par excellence*—and Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, author of the collection known as that of “Il Pecorone,” in one of the stories he puts into the mouth of the beautiful nun of Forlì, as according to her daily wont she meets the noble young Florentine (who for her sake has abjured the world), in the *parlatorio* of her convent beyond the Apennines. Introduction.

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Of Straparola’s two volumes of “Favole,” some eleven or more stories are fairy tales, already current nursery coin. Of

Introduction. his three romances one is an exquisite version of Boccaccio's "Salvestra," told with less reticence and a more dramatic finale. Of the two here selected, the story of the Serpent is found in the old French romance of "Vergilius." Part of the plot forms likewise an episode of the "Tristrem" and also of the "Grettir Saga."

"The Refusal of Fenicia" is Matteo Bandello's version of the story of Hero and Claudio in "Much Ado about Nothing." The most prolix of Italian novelists, the monk of St. Dominic might seem to have attained his pre-eminence in popularity by the perfection he achieved in the art of gossip. Yet, when he divests himself of the garrulities of the scandal-monger, his powers of quiet pathos are rarely excelled by his contemporaries.

These stories, drawn from the store-house of past storytellers, are given here in the main as they were written, but with no attempt at literal translation. Here and there a phrase has been omitted, sentences abbreviated, and in a few instances an incident has been passed over. Life's conventions have changed, if they have not bettered, and we trust Boccaccio and his fellows will not greatly blame us if, in such matters, we of to-day seem to them as those who strain at a gnat to swallow a camel.

EARLY ITALIAN LOVE STORIES.

I.

SALVESTRA.

Boccaccio, "Decameron," Day IV., Novel VIII.

Girolamo from his boyhood loves Salvestra and is loved by her. Constrained by his mother he leaves her, and returning finds her wedded to another. Secretly entering her house he there dies, and is carried into a church. Salvestra falls dead over his bier.

ONCE, in the city of Florence, according to an old story, there lived a great and wealthy merchant named Lionardo Sighieri. His wife had borne him one son called Girolamo, after whose birth, Lionardo, his affairs being duly set in order, shortly departed this present life.

The guardians, together with the mother of the child, kept strict and faithful watch over his inheritance. So Girolamo grew up, and the children of those who dwelt near by were his playmates. Now it happened that the one of all his companions whom he loved best was a little girl of his own age, the child of a tailor. And when they were somewhat older, the custom of their childish affection changed into a love so strong and over-mastering that it was never well with Girolamo save when she was in his sight, and she truly loved him no less than he who so much loved her.

Of this the mother of the boy was warned, and many a

Salvestra. time she reproved and punished him for it. But when she found she could not prevail in this matter, she sought his other guardians and said to them :

“This child of ours, who is but scarcely fourteen years old, loves the daughter of one of our neighbours, a tailor, whose name is Salvestra. And if we do nothing to separate him from her, perhaps some day, without anyone knowing it, he will make her his wife ; and then I shall never be able to feel happy again ! Or, if he should see her wedded to another, he will waste away for love of her. Thus it seems to me it would be well that you should send him away from here on some business of our merchandise to some far-off country, where she being out of his sight may pass out of his heart, and then we shall be able to find some girl, born of gentle blood, to be his wife.”

And the guardians of Girolamo considered that she spoke wisely, and that it lay in their power to do as she requested, and they sent for the boy to the warehouse where the merchandise was stored, and one of them, with great kindness, began to speak to him :

“My son, now that thou art come to riper years, it is time that thou shouldst begin to learn how to overlook your own affairs of business and merchandise. Therefore, it is our wish that thou shouldst set forth and journey as far as Paris. There it will please us that thou shouldst make some stay, since much merchandise belonging to thee is there, and see how thy riches are being dealt with. So doing thou wilt also learn better breeding, bearing, and customs than thou wouldst be taught at home, for in that city there are many great lords and barons and men of noble birth. And then, having studied their ways and manner of life, thou wilt be able to return here.”

The boy listened attentively, but in a brief space he Salvestra. replied that he would by no manner of means undertake this journey of which they spoke, for it seemed to him that as well as any other he might fitly remain at his own home in Florence. Hearing this answer his guardians upbraided the boy with many further words. But, as they could not obtain any other reply from him, they repeated what he had said to his mother.

Thereat she was bitterly angered, not because he had refused to betake himself to Paris, but by reason of his love for Salvestra. And she rebuked him with many wounding reproaches. Then again she began to flatter and beseech him with meek and gentle speeches, entreating him that he would consent to do the pleasure of his guardians. And with so many words she persuaded him that at length he agreed that for one year's space, and no more, he would go. So it was done, and it fell out that, loving Salvestra with all his heart, he went, and being put off with promises from day to day, he remained absent for the space of two whole years. When, loving her more than before, he returned to Florence, he found Salvestra had been wedded to a youth, a tentmaker by trade. For this cause Girolamo grieved out of measure. But seeing that there was no remedy for it, he set himself to find some solace for his grief. Having sought out the place where she now dwelt, he began, according to the custom of youths who are lovers, to pass by there many a time and often, believing that she would not have forgotten him, but that as it was with him so also it would be with her.

Yet it fell out wholly otherwise. In her thoughts he had no place; it was indeed as if she had never so much as seen him; or if, in truth, she still held some remembrance of her old love, she yet feigned forgetfulness. And this, in a little

Salvestra. time, the youth, not without bitter sorrow, came to understand. Nevertheless, he left nothing undone by which he might chance to win his way back to her heart. And as it seemed no other means were of any avail, he resolved, although it should cost him his very life, to speak with her face to face.

So he learnt from a neighbour the manner in which the chambers of her house were ordered. Then, one evening, when she, and her husband with her, had gone out to some merrymaking with some companions in a house near by, he entered her dwelling secretly and hid himself behind the tent-cloths which were stretching in her sleeping-chamber.

There he waited long until the girl and her husband were returned. Then, presently, when he was aware that her husband had fallen asleep, and having learnt where Salvestra lay, he drew near to the bed, and he laid his hand softly upon her, saying:

“Oh, my soul, dost thou sleep?”

The girl, who was awake, would have cried aloud for fear, but Girolamo said quickly:

“For the sake of God, keep silence! I am thy Girolamo.”

She, hearing, with great trembling said:

“Alas, Girolamo! in God’s name, go hence. Over and passed is the time when in our childishness we gave our loves no denial. Thou seest I am a wedded wife; therefore in me it would be a great sin were I to think on any other man save on my husband. And I beseech thee, by the only God, that thou wilt depart from here. For if my husband hear thee, never after should he and I dwell together in peace and quiet, even if nought worse followed. Whereas now he loves me, and in tranquillity and kindness I abide with him.”

When Girolamo heard these words they pierced him to Salvestra. the heart with sorrow. And he called to her remembrance the bygone days, and his exceeding love, which distance had never lessened. But from Salvestra he obtained nought, although with many prayers and great promises he made his entreaty. Therefore he desired death, and at the last he begged of her that in reward of his long love she would at least suffer him to rest him awhile in that her chamber, that he, being wellnigh frozen with the cold, might gain a little warmth before he went thence. Moreover he gave her his promise that he would speak no farther word to her, and that as soon as he was somewhat warmed he would depart.

Salvestra, moved by a little pity towards him, granted this his prayer; and the youth laid himself down a little space apart. Then in one remembrance he gathered together the thoughts of the constant love he had borne her, and of her present unkindness and of his lost hopes, and he, determining to live no longer, held back his breath, and without one word, with closed hands, there, near where she lay, he died.

After some space of time, the girl, fearing lest her husband should waken, began to speak thus:

“Alas, Girolamo! why dost thou not depart?”

Hearing no answer, she thought that he had fallen asleep. So she stretched out her hand that she might awaken him. And groping in the darkness she touched him, and she found him very cold. And she wondered greatly thereat, and again she laid her hand upon him more urgently, and she felt that he made no movement. And when many times she had tried to waken him in vain, she knew of a truth that he was dead; and she was immeasurably troubled. For a long while she remained not knowing what to do. At last she

Salvestra. resolved she would make trial what counsel her husband would give if he thought such a mischance had befallen another. And waking him she recounted to him the story, and then she asked what he would have done had such a thing come to pass in his own house. The brave youth answered that to him it appeared in such a case the dead man should be quietly carried to his own dwelling, and there left, and that without any blame to the woman, whom he would hold to have been without fault in the matter.

Then the girl said :

“ Thus let us do.”

And taking his hand she laid it upon the body of the dead youth.

Upon which, he, all amazed, arose, and without any further word he kindled the light, and covering the dead body, with her help, and with no reproach, he lifted it upon his shoulders and carried it to the door of Girolamo's house, and there he put it down and left it.

When the morning was come, and Girolamo was found lying dead at the entrance of the house, the people, and in especial his mother, made a great clamour. And having sought and examined the body everywhere, and having found no mark of any violence, the physicians generally believed—as was indeed the truth—that Girolamo had died of grief.

Then the body was carried into a church, and there forthwith, as is the custom, came his mother with many of her friends and neighbours, to weep and make lamentation over him.

And because the concourse was very great, the brave youth, in whose house Girolamo had died, said to Salvestra :

“ Alas ! wrap thyself in a mantle and go to the church

where Girolamo lies, and mingle with the women there and Salvestra. hearken how they speak of this matter ; and I, meanwhile, will do the like amongst the men, so that we may learn if anything is rumoured against us."

The girl, who now tardily had become pitiful of heart, was well content to do his bidding ; and she went thither willingly, as one who desired to see his dead face, to whom living she had refused even the grace of one kiss.

Yet is it a marvellous thing to think how hardly we learn to fathom the strength of love !

The shut heart, which with all his fair gifts of fortune Girolamo had not been able to unlock, the sight of his misery broke open. The fire of the old love with which Salvestra had loved him, rekindled itself with a great compassion as she saw his dead face. She pressed herself between woman and woman of the crowd, nor did she stay her steps until she had reached the very place where he lay. Then with one loud wail she cast herself down beside the dead youth. But few indeed were the tears that fell upon his face ; for at that first touch, as grief had bereft Girolamo of his life, so now she by grief, in like manner, was slain. And when the women around would have striven to comfort her, and bade her rise up from where she lay (not yet knowing who she was), she still lay motionless, and when they would have lifted her they knew her for Salvestra, and they knew that she was dead.

For this cause all the women who were there, overwhelmed with a twofold pity, began again a yet more grievous lamentation.

While thus they wept, outside the church the rumour of what had betided Salvestra spread itself, passing from man to man, until it reached the ears of Salvestra's husband, who

Salvestra. stood amongst the crowd. He having heard, refusing comfort or solace from any man for a long space, wept, and to many of those near he told the story of what had that night befallen his wife and Girolamo, making manifest to all the cause of the youth's death, which all there present bewailed.

Then having taken the dead girl, and having adorned her as the bodies of the dead are attired, he laid her to rest beside the youth, and after long lamenting, in one same tomb the twain were sepulchred. Thus they, whom, living, love had been impotent to join together, death united in an inseparable companionship.

II.

THE DEATH-DREAM.

Boccaccio, "Decameron," Day VI., Novel VI.

Andriviola loves Gabriotto. She tells him of a dream she has dreamt, and he her of another. He dies suddenly in her arms. While she, with a serving-woman, is carrying him to his house, they are taken by the guard of the Signory, and she tells what has happened. The Podesta would have had her love, but she will not suffer him. Her father, having heard of the matter, and she being found innocent, he causes her to be released. She, for sake of what has been, refusing to remain in the world, becomes a nun.

THERE once dwelt in the city of Brescia a man of gentle birth called Messer Negro da Ponte Carraro. Amongst other children he had one daughter, whose name was Andriviola. She was young and very beautiful, and she was still unwedded.

Now it chanced that she came to love a neighbour of theirs named Gabriotto. He was of base parentage, but well nurtured in all praiseworthy customs; moreover, he was of fair countenance and gracious bearing.

By means and aid of a serving-woman of her father's house the girl brought it to pass that Gabriotto learnt he was loved by her. Nor was this all, but likewise the woman led him to a fair garden of her home, and many a time and often, each with the other meeting, there they had great delight. Moreover, that never, nor for any cause save death, they should be parted from the joy of their love, secretly they wedded, and thus they continued to keep tryst together hiddenly.

After a while, it happened that one night it seemed to

the girl in a dream that she saw herself in the garden with Gabriotto, and she thought that she held him in her arms, and that each rejoiced the other with the greatest gladness that might be. And it appeared to her that while they thus abode together, there came forth from Gabriotto's body a dark and fearful form; the shape of it she could not descry. And it seized Gabriotto, and with marvellous strength it tore him from her arms in her despite. Then, with him, it was lost to her eyes beneath the earth. Nor ever again could she see either him or it. Therefore she felt a great and surpassing grief. With that she wakened, and being awake she was joyous of heart, finding that it was not as she had dreamed. Nevertheless the dream made her afraid.

The following night Gabriotto desired to come to her, but she wrought as much as she might with him that he should not, because of her secret fear. Yet seeing that it was his wish, for he had no cognizance of her fear, she suffered him that night to come into the garden.

And when they had gathered many roses, white and red—for it was the season of roses—she went with him to rest upon the steps of a most clear and fair fountain which was in the garden, and there for some long space they greatly rejoiced together. Then Gabriotto questioned her, asking wherefore the foregone day she had striven to forbid his coming.

So she told him of the dream she had dreamed, and of the misgivings it had awakened within her.

Thereat Gabriotto, hearing, laughed, and he said that it was great foolishness to put any faith in dreams, because they were wont to arise either from overmuch food or from the lack thereof; and that every day they were seen to be false. And then he said:

“Had I had it in my mind to let myself be guided by dreams, I too should not have come hither. Not indeed by reason of the dream thou didst dream, but because of one I myself dreamt the night of yesterday. And thus it was in my dream. I seemed to be in a fair and pleasant wood, wherein, hunting, I had taken a fawn in the chase. And the fawn was so lovely and so winning that none other like her could ever have been seen. She was whiter than any snow, and soon she became so tame to my hand that from me she would not go. Moreover, I held her so dear, that because I would not have her leave me, I fastened a collar of gold about her neck, and with a gold chain I held her bound. Soon after, it seemed to me that while my fawn lay resting her head upon my knee, a coal-black greyhound came towards me—whence he came I knew not—starved and fearful of aspect. I appeared to make no resistance, for it seemed to put its teeth to my left breast, and so deeply tore my breast that it reached my heart, the which it rent from me. Whereat I felt so sharp a pain that my dream was broken, and I wakened suddenly. With my right hand I hastened to search my side and see if aught there were amiss, but finding nothing I mocked myself for having sought. Nevertheless, of what significance is it? Such, and other things yet more terrible I have dreamt, nor has anything in the world happened unto me therefrom either more nor less. So let the matter be, and let us seek only the gladness of this our hour.”

The
Death-
Dream.

The girl, already terrified by her own dream, hearing Gabriotto's words, became yet more afraid. But she strove to dissemble her fears, lest they should be the cause of any distress to him. So, kissing and caressing him, and by him kissed and caressed, she, although mistrustfully, solaced her-

self. Nor was she aware that oftener than was her wont she many a time looked on his face, and sometimes gazed quickly round to see if any dark thing came forth from any place.

Presently, as thus they abode together, Gabriotto gave a deep sigh, and outstretching his arms to her, he cried :

“ Alas, my soul ! help me, for I die.”

So saying he fell backwards upon the grass. The girl lifted him upon her knee, and weeping, said :

“ Oh, sweet my lord, what dost thou feel amiss ? ”

But Gabriotto answered her not, and breathing hard and covered with sweat, in a short space he passed from this present life.

To the girl, who loved him more than herself, those who will may know how grievous and lamentable a thing this was. She wept bitterly, and many times she called on him in vain. But when she had searched every part of his body and found it cold, she saw that he was in very truth dead. So, not knowing what to do or what to say to herself, she went, full of anguish and lamentation, to summon the serving-woman to whom their love had been known. And to her she showed all her misery and wretchedness.

Then, after they had mourned together over the dead body of Gabriotto, the girl said to her woman :

“ Since God has taken him from me I will no longer abide in this present life of ours. Only before I die I would, if I might, find some good way fitly to serve my honour and the secret love which has been between us twain ; and that the body, whence his gracious soul is departed, should be sepulchred.”

To which the woman made answer :

“ Daughter mine, do not speak of wishing to slay thyself because here thou hast lost him. Thus doing, in the other world thou wilt lose him also. For thou wilt be in hell,

where I am well assured that he, who was of upright life, is not. It were better far to take comfort to thyself, and to devise how by prayer and other good deeds thou canst aid his soul, if by chance of any sin committed he has need thereof. For his burying there is means here, in this garden. Nor will any man know of it, for none knew that ever he came hither. But if this pleaseth thee not, let us put him outside the garden, and there let him remain; to-morrow morning he will be found and carried to his house, and he will be buried by his kindred.”

The
Death-
Dream.

With ever-flowing tears and full of misery the girl listened to the counsels of the woman. To the first she gave no heed; to the second she replied, saying:

“Now God forbid that I should suffer so dear a youth, whom I so much loved and wedded as my husband, to be buried like a dog or left lying upon the open stones of the street. My tears he has had; in so far as it lies in me, he shall have those of his kindred. I have in my mind already what in this matter we have to do.”

She bade the woman quickly fetch a piece of silken cloth she had laid by in a chest. When it was brought she spread it as best she could beneath the body of Gabriotto, and she put his head upon a soft pillow. With many tears she closed his eyes and his mouth, and she made him a rose-garland, and the roses they two had gathered she heaped around him.

Then to the woman she said:

“It is but a very little way from here to the door of his house; therefore, having made all ready, we—thou and I—will bear him hence, and before his door we will lay him. Soon the dawn will come, and he will be seen; and although this may be of but small comfort to his kindred, yet me, in whose arms he died, it shall greatly please.”

And when she had spoken thus, again with abundant crying, she cast herself down beside him, and for a long while she made lamentation.

Then, because the day drew near apace, the woman prevailed upon her with much entreaty, and she rose, and that same ring with which Gabriotto had wedded her, she drew from her finger and set it weeping upon his hand, saying :

“Dear my lord, if thy soul now sees my crying—or if it be that in the corpse whence the spirit is departed there is neither knowledge nor feeling—receive with kindness her last gift whom living thou didst love so much.”

This said she swooned, falling backwards upon his body. After a while she came to herself and arose, and with the woman she lifted the cloth on which the body lay, and going forth from the garden they took their way towards his house.

Thus going it fell out that the guard of the Podesta happened to be passing at that hour, and the women were taken with the dead body. Andrivuola, who desired death rather than life, recognized the officers of the Signory, and said openly :

“Who you are I know, and know that if I wished to fly it would avail me nothing. I am ready to go with you before the Signory, and to declare before them what it is that here you have seen. But if I obey you, let no man of you be so bold as to put a hand on me, nor to stir one single thing from about the body, if you would not be denounced by me.”

Thus untouched by them she went of her own accord to the palace of the Signory. The Podesta, to whom word had been brought concerning this matter, arose, and having sent

for Andrivuola to be brought to him, he informed himself fully of all that had happened. And forthwith he caused certain physicians to examine the body of Gabriotto, and see if the youth had been slain by poison, or by any other foul means had met with his death. But, when they had searched, the physicians with one accord affirmed that an imposthume had broken near his heart, whereby he had been suffocated.

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Hearing this, the Podesta understood clearly that Andri-
vuola was innocent. Then he set himself to make plain to her that it lay in his power to give her that liberty he might not sell. Moreover, he told her that if she would consent to give herself to him, and agree to do his pleasure, he would forthwith release her. But Andrivuola would not in any such sort deal with him, and when he would have laid his hands upon her, kindled with great wrath, she thrust him from her, and rebuked him with anger and scorn.

The day being now come, tidings of these things were brought to Messer Negro, and he, being overwhelmed with mortal grief thereat, betook himself to the palace with a great company of his friends and kinsmen. Being come thither, he was informed by the Podesta of all that had befallen that night, and when he had heard he demanded with lamentation that his daughter should immediately be restored to him.

Then the Podesta, wishing to be the first to accuse himself of the offence of which he knew Andrivuola would accuse him, gave all praise to the girl for her constancy. In witness to this he told what he had done. Therefore, he said, having proved her fortitude, he had set his love upon her, and notwithstanding that she had taken for her husband a man of base birth, he would willingly, if it accorded with her father's pleasure and her own, take her for his wife.

While they thus talked, Andrivuola came into her father's presence, and cast herself down before him, and, weeping, said :

"My father, there is no need that I should repeat the story of my love and my mischance ; for I am sure that you have heard and know thereof. Therefore I pray humbly, in as far as lieth in me, that you will pardon me for my fault, in that without your knowledge I took him, who most pleased me, for my husband. And I entreat your forgiveness, not in order that life should be granted to me, but that I may die, not as your enemy, but as your daughter."

Thus, weeping, she fell at his feet.

Messer Negro, who was old, and of a gentle and loving nature, hearing her words, began to weep, and raising her tenderly he said :

"My daughter, rather, in truth, would I have had thee wedded to one who, according to my thinking, it should have befitted thee to take. Yet, hadst thou wedded him whom thou didst choose for thyself, still I would have been well content. But that thou, of thy little faith in me, didst hide thy marriage from me, grieves me. And the more because I see thy husband is lost to me even before I knew him. Nevertheless, as what is, is, that honour which, as to my own son, I would have rendered him living, to him I will render, he being dead."

And turning himself to his sons and kindred, he commanded that they should prepare a noble and honourable funeral for Gabriotto.

Now the kindred of the youth, hearing the news, had assembled, as many both of men and women as were in the city, where the body lay in the midst of the court, upon Andrivuola's cloth, and with all her roses around it. There,

not alone by her and by his kindred, Gabriotto was mourned, but publicly by almost all the women and the men of the place. Moreover, he was carried upon the shoulders of the principal citizens of the town from the court of the palace to his entombment, not as one of ignoble birth, but as born of noble blood. The
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After the space of some days, the Podesta pursued his demand to make Andrivuola his wife, and Messer Negro reasoned thereof with his daughter. But she would not hearken. Only wishing, as far as might be, to do her father's pleasure, she, with her serving-woman, betook herself to a convent of good and holy repute, and there becoming a nun, she lived henceforward a good life.

III.

THE LADY OF BELMONTE.

Giovanni Fiorentino, "Il Pecorone," Day IV., Novel I.

How Giannetto, his father being dead, was received by Messere Ansaldo as his son at Venice. Giannetto, desiring to see the world, embarked upon a ship and entered the port of Belmonte, and of the conditions of his espousal with the lady, and of Messere Ansaldo's bond with a Jew, and of his deliverance by the lady.

THERE once lived in Florence, in the House of the Scali, a merchant who was named Bindo; he had many times been to Tana in Alexandria, and likewise made all the other long journeys which are customary, with merchandise. This Bindo was a man of some wealth, and he had three sons. Being near to death, he called the two elder, and in their presence he made his will, bequeathing to these two all the goods he possessed in the world. To the youngest he bequeathed nothing. When he had made this testament, the youngest son, whose name was Giannetto, hearing of it, came to his bed to seek him, and said to him:

"My father, greatly do I wonder at that which you have done, in thus forgetting me in your will."

The father answered:

"Giannetto mine, there is none in the world dearer to me than thou, and therefore it is that I would not have thee remain here when I am dead. I will that thou, I being dead, shouldst go to Venice to a godfather of thine, who is called Messere Ansaldo. He has no son of his own, and many a time he has written to me to send thee to him.

Moreover, I well know, and can tell thee, that he is the richest of all living Christian merchants. Therefore, when I am dead, go to him and bear to him this letter, and if so be that thou dost well, thou wilt be a rich man."

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The son said :

" Father mine, I am ready to do your commands."

Then his father blessed him, and a few days after died, and all his sons made a great lamentation, and rendered all befitting honour to the dead.

After a little time had passed, the two brothers called Giannetto, and they spoke to him on this wise :

" Brother, it is true that our father made his testament, leaving us his heirs and making no mention therein of thee. But not any the less thou art our brother, and from this present hour whatsoever thou lackest is as much thine as ours."

Giannetto answered them :

" Brothers mine, I thank you for your proffer, but, for me, I am fully resolved to go forth to try my fortune elsewhere. And this I am determined to do, and you shall inherit what is assigned to you with its blessing."

Therefore, seeing him resolute, they gave him a horse and money for his charges. So Giannetto bade them farewell and took his road to Venice, and came to Messere Ansaldo's house of merchandise, and gave him the letter which his father had given him before he died.

Messere Ansaldo, reading the letter, knew Giannetto for the son of Bindo, whom he had greatly loved, and when he had finished reading he instantly embraced him, saying, " Welcome is thy coming, godson mine, for which I have greatly longed."

And quickly he asked for news of Bindo, to which Gian-

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netto made reply that he was dead. Wherefore, with many tears, he laid his arms upon him and kissed him and said :

“ Much I sorrow for the death of Bindo, for through his aid I gained great part of all that I possess. Yet so much I rejoice in thee that my sorrow is lessened.”

And he commanded that Giannetto should be led to his own house, and he ordained that his master-merchants, his overseers, his pages, and his serving-men, and all his household, should obey and serve Giannetto. And he gave to him the keys of all his gold, saying :

“ My son, spend what is here, clothe and array thee at thy pleasure, and feast the men of the city, and make thyself known. For I say, and consider it well, that I shall love you the more as you make yourself beloved by others.”

Therefore Giannetto began to use fellowship with the gentlemen of Venice, to keep open house, to feast, to give gifts, to array his serving-men, to purchase good steeds, to joust and tilt, as one well practised and expert, generous and courteous in all things. And he knew how to show honour and liberality where it was due, and always he showed more reverence to Messere Ansaldo than if he had been twenty times his father. And so wisely he dealt with all manner and kinds of men, that the city of Venice wished well to him, seeing him prudent and gracious and beyond measure courteous. And both men and women loved him right well, and Messere Ansaldo thought only of him, so much his deeds and his bearing pleased him. There was no banquet in Venice to which he was not bidden, so much was he beloved by all.

Now it happened that two of his favourite companions wished to betake themselves with two vessels of merchandise

to Alexandria, as was every year their custom. This they told Giannetto, saying :

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“Thou shouldst come and take thy pleasure with us upon the sea, to see the world, and in especial Damascus and the countries that side of the sea.”

Giannetto answered :

“In good faith right willingly would I go, if my father, Messere Ansaldo, but gave the word.”

They said :

“We will see that he gives it thee, and is content.”

Forthwith they sought Messere Ansaldo, and said :

“We are come to pray you that it will please you to bid Giannetto that he should come this springtime with us to Alexandria, and that you would furnish him with some ship or vessel, so that he may see a little of the world.”

Messere Ansaldo said :

“If it pleases him I am satisfied.”

They replied :

“Messere, it doth please him.”

Wherefore Messere Ansaldo immediately had a most fair vessel made ready, and laded it with great store of merchandise, and furnished it with as many banners and weapons as were needful. And when the ship was ready Messere Ansaldo commanded the captain and all the others who were engaged in the ship's service that they should obey Giannetto and take heedful care for his safety.

“Because I do not send you,” he said, “for any gain that I wish to acquire, but only that he may take his pleasure in seeing the world.”

And when Giannetto was to set sail, all Venice came out to see, for no such ship, either for beauty or so richly furnished,

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had left Venice for many a long day. And for his departing all were grieved.

Thus, having bidden farewell to Messere Ansaldo and to his fellowship, they set sail, and going out to sea took their way to Alexandria in the name of God and of good fortune.

Now these three companions, in their three vessels, having sailed for many days, it happened that one day just before dawn Giannetto saw a sea-gulf where there was a very fine harbour, and he asked the captain of his ship what was the name of the port. The captain answered him :

“ Messere, this place belongs to a lady, a widow, for whom many and many a noble lord has run great hazards.”

Giannetto said :

“ How so ? ”

The other answered :

“ Messere, this lady is both fair and lovable. And this law she has made : that whosoever here seeks harbourage must wake throughout that night in her company. And if he abide awake he shall hold her for his wife, and the whole lordship of the port and of all the lands appertaining shall be his. But if he fails to observe this condition, he must forfeit all that he possesses.”

Giannetto thought thereon awhile, and then he said :

“ Take what manner of means pleases you, and let us put in at this port.”

The captain replied :

“ Messere, take heed to what you say ; for full many have gone thither to return undone.”

Giannetto said :

“ Do not concern yourself therewith, but do as I have said.”

And thus it was done. The vessel's head was turned swiftly and the sails were struck, so that the companions who were in the other ships knew nothing thereof. The
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By the morning the rumour went abroad that a fair vessel was lying in the harbour, and all the people went forth to see it. And this was soon reported to the lady. So she sent for Giannetto, who came to her forthwith, and very courteously saluted her. She took him by the hand, asking him whence he came, and likewise if he were acquainted with the custom of the country.

Giannetto replied that he was, and that for that very cause and none other he was come thither.

And she said :

“ And to you I bid welcome a hundred times.”

All that day she did him great honour, and she sent and bade the barons and counts and knights who were her subjects to come and bear him company. And all these took delight in Giannetto, because he was of gentle and gracious bearing, and ready of speech. So that they all loved him right well, and all that day they danced and sang and for his sake high festival was kept at the court; and everyone there would willingly have had him for their lord.

When the evening was come, the lady took him by the hand and led him to a chamber, and there came to him two damozels, one bearing all manner of comfits and one with wine.

The lady said :

“ I know well that you would gladly drink. Therefore partake of this wine.”

Giannetto then took the comfits and he drank of the wine. But the wine was so mixed that no man drinking of it could abide awake. Knowing nought thereof, Giannetto drank

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some half of the cup they offered him, for the wine seemed to him good to drink. And having drunk, forthwith he fell asleep.

So when the daybreak was come, they left Giannetto sleeping. And the lady gave commands that his ship should be despoiled, and on it they found much rich and precious merchandise.

Now the third hour of the day being passed, the waiting-woman of the lady sought Giannetto and bade him rise and depart in God's name, because he had forfeited the ship and all that was thereon.

Therewith he was much ashamed, and it seemed to him he had acquitted himself ill. The lady caused a horse and money for the journey to be given to him, and he departed heavy at heart and sad, and journeyed towards Venice. Being arrived there, for shame's sake he would not go to his own house, but he sought instead the house of one of his companions, who wondering greatly said :

"Alas, Giannetto ! what is this ?"

And he answered :

"One night my vessel struck upon a rock, and everything was wrecked and broken, and one was cast one way and one that, and holding to a piece of the wood I was thrown up upon the shore, and thus I came to land and am here."

Giannetto remained for many days in the house of his friend. Then one day his companion went to visit Messere Ansaldo and found him very melancholy.

Messere Ansaldo said :

"So much I fear me that my son is dead, and that some mishap by sea has befallen him, that no good thing seems left to me ; so great is the love I bear to him."

The youth said :

" I can give you news of him. He has been wrecked at sea and has lost everything. Only he himself is escaped."

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Messere Ansaldo said :

" Praise be to God ! So be it that he is escaped, I am content, nor care I aught for what is lost. Where lieth he ? "

The youth replied :

" He is in my house."

Forthwith Messere Ansaldo rose and went to seek him. And when he had found him he hastened to embrace him and said :

" My son, thou hast no need to shame thyself before me—to all it may happen to suffer shipwreck. And do not therefore let thyself be daunted. So long as no evil has chanced to thee I am content."

Thus always comforting him Messere Ansaldo led him back to his house.

The report spread throughout Venice, and everyone was grieved at the misadventure which Giannetto had had. Presently, after a short space of time, his two companions returned from Alexandria with their riches. And when they had come back they inquired for Giannetto, and all that was known was told to them. And having heard they hastened to him, saying :

" How didst thou part from us ? Where didst thou go ? For we could learn nothing concerning thee, and sailing back all that day we could not find thee, nor discover where thou wert gone. And so much were we afflicted that all our voyage we could find no pleasure in aught, thinking that thou wert dead."

Giannetto replied :

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"A contrary wind rose round a point of the land and hurled my vessel to pieces on a rock near by the shore, so that I scarcely escaped, and all else went down."

This was the excuse which Giannetto gave to conceal his discomfiture, and they made a great feast together, thanking God for his safety, saying :

"Next spring, by God's favour, we will regain all that you have lost. In the meantime let us set sadness aside and make merry."

So they gave themselves to pleasures and merry-making as they had been accustomed to do. But nevertheless Giannetto did nothing but consider in his mind how he could return to his lady, thinking to himself: "It is surely befitting that I should obtain her for my wife, or, failing, die." Thus nothing rejoiced him. Wherefore many a time Messere Ansaldo said to him :

"Do not grieve thyself, for great are our possessions, and all will be well with us."

Giannetto answered :

"Signor mine, never shall I be content until I have repaired my miscarriage."

Seeing from this on what he had set his desires, when the time was come Messere Ansaldo equipped another vessel, and laded it with even more and rarer merchandise than the first ; so much so that in it he placed the larger part of all that he possessed in the world. And the two companions, when they too had embarked their cargo on board their ships, together with Giannetto, set forth upon their voyage. Sailing for many days, Giannetto kept continual watch for the harbour which was called the Port of the Lady of Belmonte. One night, reaching the opening of the harbour, which was in a bend of the shore, Giannetto recognized it at once, and setting sail,

steered thither and cast anchor, so that his companions in the other ships knew nothing thereof.

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The lady, rising in the morning and looking over the harbour, saw the flags of the ship waving in the wind. And immediately she knew the ship, and called one of her waiting-women, and said :

“ Dost thou know those banners ? ”

The waiting-woman answered :

“ Madonna, it seems to be the ship of that same youth who came here a year ago and wagered so great riches with his merchandise.”

The lady said :

“ Of a truth this is so. And indeed I cannot be less than exceedingly beloved by him, for never before has any man returned to seek me a second time.”

The waiting-woman said :

“ More gracious and more courteous a youth than he have I never seen.”

Then the lady sent pages and squires, who visited him with much rejoicing, and he made merry with them all, and feasted them. And thus he came to the castle and into the presence of the lady. When she saw him she embraced him with great joy and good cheer, and he her again with much reverence. And all that day they kept gay festival, for the lady bade many barons and noble ladies to feast at her court in honour of Giannetto. And all the barons grieved for him, and willingly they would have had him for their lord, by reason of his great courtesy, and because they were well pleased with him. And all the women too loved him, seeing his skill in dancing and his joyous countenance, and all deemed him the son of some great lord.

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When the evening was come the lady took him by the hand and said to him :

“ Come and repose thyself.”

And she led him to a chamber, and there gave him to eat and to drink, and straightway he fell asleep ; and when the morning was come the lady sent forthwith to despoil the ship.

At the third hour of the day Giannetto wakened, and raising his head saw that already the morning was far spent, and he arose with shame.

Then a horse and money for the way were given to him, and they said to him :

“ Depart hence.”

And he ashamed straightway departed, sad and disconsolate.

For many days he journeyed, making no tarrying until he reached Venice, and he went by night to the house of his friend, who, seeing him, was astonished beyond all measure, saying :

“ Alas ! what is this ? ”

Giannetto replied :

“ An evil chance. Cursed be the ill-fortune that ever befalleth me in that country ! ”

His companion said :

“ Verily, thou mayst well say it is accursed, for in that thou hast been the ruin of Messere Ansaldo, who was once the richest among all Christian merchants. And worse than thy fortune is the shame thou hast done him.”

For many days Giannetto lay hidden in the house of his friend, not knowing what to do or to say. Sometimes he thought of going back to Florence without saying aught to Messere Ansaldo ; then he resolved again to seek him. And

thus he did. When Messere Ansaldo saw him, he rose up and quickly embraced him and said :

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“Welcome to thee, my son.”

And Giannetto weeping embraced him.

When Messere Ansaldo had heard all he said :

“Dost thou not know how it is with me, Giannetto? Do not grieve thyself any whit. Since I have seen thee again I am content. There is still left enough and to spare. It is the way of the sea to take from one and to give to another.”

The news of this spread throughout Venice, and everyone spoke of Messere Ansaldo, and were grievously troubled for his losses. And Messere Ansaldo was obliged to sell many of his possessions to pay his creditors that which he owed them for merchandise.

Then it happened that Giannetto's companions came back very rich from Alexandria, and having returned to Venice it was told them what had befallen Giannetto, and how he had met with shipwreck and lost everything. Hearing this they marvelled, saying :

“This is the strangest hap we have ever known.”

And they went to Messere Ansaldo and to Giannetto and showed them great kindness, and they said :

“Messere, do not let it surprise you that this year we intend to go and retrieve your losses, because we have been as it were the cause of them. It was at the first our doing that Giannetto accompanied us. And do not misdoubt this, but while our possessions are ours do with them as though they were yours.”

Messere Ansaldo gave them thanks, and said that he still had enough for his needs.

But day and night Giannetto thought thereon, and nothing

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availed to gladden him. And Messere Ansaldo asked him how it went with him, and he answered :

“ I shall never be satisfied until I have regained what I have lost.”

Messere Ansaldo said :

“ My son, I do not desire that thou shouldst again leave me ; for it were better we should dwell at home quietly with what remains to us than that thou shouldst any more depart.”

Giannetto replied :

“ I am determined to do the utmost that I can do, for I should hold myself in great despite if I held my hand thus.”

Wherefore Messere Ansaldo, seeing him resolved, set himself to sell everything that he had in the world, and to make ready another ship. And he so wrought that nothing remained to him, and he furnished a very fair vessel with merchandise. And because ten thousand ducats were lacking, he went to a Jew at Mestri, and borrowed them upon the covenant and condition that if he had not returned them on St. John's Day of the June to come, the Jew should take from him a pound of flesh from whatsoever part of his body it so pleased him. And with this Messere Ansaldo was satisfied. And the Jew drew up the bond by law, before witnesses, with all the forms and ceremonies required. Then he counted over to him the ten thousand ducats of gold, and with these Messere Ansaldo provided all that was still needed for the ship. And if the first two vessels had been fairly freighted, this far surpassed them in everything. And the two companions of Giannetto likewise prepared their ships, intending in their hearts that whatever they might gain they would bestow upon Giannetto.

When it was time to start, being ready to embark, Messere Ansaldo said to Giannetto :

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“Thou art about to set forth, my son, and thou knowest the contract by which I am bound. One thing only I ask of thee. That is, if any misfortune befall thee, that thou wilt return to me that I may see thee before I die ; so I shall die happy.”

Giannetto replied :

“Messere Ansaldo, I will do all that pleases you.”

Messere Ansaldo then blessed him, and they said farewell and set forth on their voyage.

The companions who were with Giannetto watched well over his ship, but Giannetto thought of nothing but of how he might strike sail for the port of Belmonte. Therefore one night he prevailed with one of the sailors to steer the ship into the harbour of the lady. When the dawn illuminated the new day, his companions in the other two ships searched around, and not seeing anywhere Giannetto's ship, said to one another :

“Surely his ill-fortune has again overtaken him.”

And they decided to pursue their own course, greatly marvelling at what had happened.

Now Giannetto's ship being come into that port, all the people of the castle, hearing that he had returned, pressed forth to see. And they were much astonished thereat, saying :

“This must indeed be the son of some powerful man, seeing that every year he comes with such rich cargoes and such fair vessels. Would that it pleased God to make him lord over us !”

So all the great men, the barons and knights of the land, visited him, and word was brought to the lady that Giannetto was come back. Therefore she went to the windows of the

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palace, and saw the ship, which was most fair, and she knew the flags; and then she signed herself with the holy cross, saying:

"Of a surety this is a man of great worth, and it is he who before hazarded his wealth in this country."

And she sent for him.

Giannetto came to her and many times embraced her, and either saluted and each did to the other great worship. And all the day they spent feasting and rejoicing, and they made a great tournament in Giannetto's honour. Many barons and knights jousted that day, and Giannetto with them, and he performed marvellous feats of arms, so well practised was he both in arms and in horsemanship. And all the barons were so well pleased that there was none amongst them who did not desire him to rule over them.

When the evening was come, the lady took him by the hand and said:

"Let us go and repose ourselves."

So they came to the entrance of the chamber. And as they were about to enter, one of the waiting-women, taking pity on Giannetto, whispered in his ear:

"Make semblance to drink, but drink not."

And Giannetto gave heed to what she said.

When they had come within the chamber, the lady said:

"I know well that you are sore athirst, therefore I will give you wine forthwith."

And there came two damozels—they were as angels to look upon—and they brought wine and fruits, and they gave him to drink of the wine.

And Giannetto said:

"What man could refuse the wine, seeing the cupbearers so fair?"

Whereat the lady smiled.

And Giannetto took the cup, and he made semblance to drink, but secretly he poured the wine away.

The lady, thinking that he had drunk thereof, said in her heart, "Another vessel it will be that thou shalt command, for of a surety this one is lost to thee."

Then Giannetto feigned to fall into a deep sleep. Whereupon, drawing near to see, the lady bade him lie softly and sleep well. But he, turning suddenly towards her, caught her by the hand, and then he took her in his arms and he kissed her full joyously. Wherefore she, seeing that he was awake, was right well pleased thereat, and she kissed him again. And thus it fell out that either espoused the other in holy marriage.

So Giannetto was made lord over all her lands, and she sent a herald and summoned all her barons and knights and other citizens, and said to them :

"Giannetto is your lord. Let us celebrate a festival in his honour."

And the bells were rung and the trumpets were blown for a feast. And many lords and counts who were not in the castle were likewise bidden that they should come and see their new lord.

Then a great and fair banquet was spread, and Giannetto was made a knight, and he was placed in the chief seat and a sceptre was put in his hand, and he was proclaimed their lord with glory and triumph.

So all the lords and knights made merry with jousts and tourneys, and dancing and singing and music, and all other pastimes appertaining to a feast. And Messere Giannetto, as a generous ruler, gave to them gifts of cloth of silk and other costly treasures which he had in his ship. Also, he bore him-

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self as a wise ruler, and made himself to be feared, that he might maintain justice and right-doing amongst all manner of people.

Thus with banquets and revels he neither heeded nor remembered how that Messere Ansaldo lay bound for ten thousand ducats to the Jew.

It happened that one day Giannetto was at the window of the palace with his wife, and he saw a company of men with lighted tapers in their hands pass along the piazza on their way to make their offerings.

Messere Giannetto said :

“What meaneth this?”

The lady answered :

“These are a band of craftsmen who are on their way to make their offerings at the shrine of San Giovanni, for to-day is his feast-day.”

Then Messere Giannetto remembered him of Messere Ansaldo, and he arose from the window and drew a heavy sigh, and all his countenance was changed. And many times he paced up and down the hall, thinking thereupon.

The lady asked him what ill had befallen him.

He answered :

“None.”

Then the lady began to examine him, saying :

“Verily and indeed somewhat is amiss which you will not reveal.”

And so much she wrought with him that he told her how Messere Ansaldo was held bound for ten thousand ducats, and that the term was this day expired, and he said :

“Therefore it is very grievous to me, for that by my default my father dies. Because if to-day he cannot pay, he must lose a pound of flesh from his body.”

The lady said :

“ Messere, get you forthwith to horse, and go by land— which is faster travelling than by sea—and take what company you will with you, and carry ten thousand ducats, and never rest until you reach Venice, and if he is not dead see that you bring him here.”

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So straightway he commanded that the trumpets should be sounded, and he took horse with twenty companions, and he took a great sum of money and set out upon the road to Venice.

There it had happened that at the term of the expiration of the bond the Jew, casting Messere Ansaldo into prison, demanded the forfeiture of the pound of flesh. But Messere Ansaldo besought him to delay his death some little space, in order that, should Giannetto return, he might at least once more see his face.

The Jew said :

“ In this matter of delay I am ready to do your will. But should he return a hundred times over, I will have my pound of flesh according to the bond.”

With this Messere Ansaldo answered that he was satisfied, and all Venice spoke thereof. To everyone it appeared a grievous thing, and many merchants collected together to pay the debt. But the Jew would have nothing to do with them. Upon this murder he was bent, so that he might boast that through him the greatest of the Christian merchants had met with his death.

Meanwhile, Messere Giannetto being gone, the lady quickly disguised herself as a doctor-of-law and set forth after him with two servants.

Messere Giannetto being arrived in Venice went to the house of the Jew, and with great joy embraced Messere

Ansaldo. Then he told the Jew that he had brought with him his gold, and as much more as he desired. The Jew replied that with the money he had nothing to do, seeing the term when it was due was expired, but that he would have the pound of flesh. Over this a great disputation was held, everyone condemning the Jew. Nevertheless, Venice being a country where the law was strictly observed, and the Jew being clearly within the rights allowed by the law, none dared refuse them to him, although they made many entreaties that he would relent. And all the merchants that were in Venice went to plead with the Jew, but he became yet more obdurate. Wherefore Messere Giannetto made proffer to him of twenty thousand; and the Jew refusing, he offered thirty, and then forty, and then fifty, and thus it came to a hundred thousand ducats. When the Jew said:

“Know'st thou how it is? If thou wert to offer me more ducats than this whole city is worth, with them I would not content me. For what I will have is that which is given me by the bond.”

Thus the dispute stood when the lady, clothed as a doctor-of-law, reaching Venice, dismounted at an inn. The master of the inn asked one of the servants:

“Who and what is this gentleman?”

The servant, already instructed by the lady as to what account, when questioned, he should give of her, replied:

“He is a doctor-of-law who has been studying at Bologna and is on his way to his own home.”

The innkeeper, hearing this, did him great honour.

When the doctor-of-law was seated at the table, he said to his host:

“How is this city governed?”

The host replied:

"Messere, with too much justice."

Said the doctor-of-law :

"How so ?"

The host continued :

"How, I will set forth. There came here from Florence a youth, whose name was Giannetto, and he went to a godfather of his who was called Messere Ansaldo. And he was dear to all the men and women of the land, for he was very gracious and comely in his bearing. Nor had any other come to the city who was his equal. Now his godfather three separate times equipped three vessels for him, and each was of great price ; two miscarried and were wrecked. So that money lacked for the third. Wherefore Messere Ansaldo borrowed ten thousand ducats from a Jew, with this condition, that, if he failed to return them by the festival of San Giovanni the next June, the said Jew might take from any part of his body a pound of flesh. Now the youth has returned, and instead of ten has offered a hundred thousand ducats, but the false Jew will take none. Moreover, all the good men of the city have been to intercede, but have availed nothing."

The doctor-of-law replied :

"This is an easy matter to decide."

The host said :

"If it should please you to take upon yourself to decide it, so that this good man may not die, you will thereby gain the love and gratitude of the most praiseworthy youth who was ever born, and also of all the dwellers in this land."

Then the doctor-of-law made a proclamation that whosoever had any cause to be tried should bring it to him. And it was told Messere Giannetto how a judge from Bologna was come who would determine all questions of equity. So Messere Giannetto said to the Jew :

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"Let us go before this judge."

The Jew said :

"Let us go, but, come what may, I demand no justice save the fulfilment of my bond."

When they were come into the presence of the judge they made him due reverence. The judge recognized Messere Giannetto, but Messere Giannetto did not recognize the judge, because he had dyed his face with certain herbs.

Messere Giannetto and the Jew each stated his case and expounded the nature of the dispute to the judge. He took the bond and read it, and then he said to the Jew :

"I would have you take these hundred thousand ducats and release this good man, who will ever after be grateful to you."

The Jew replied :

"By no manner of means will I do this."

The judge said :

"It would be well for you."

But the Jew would in no wise consent. So they all went accordingly to the court of justice where such cases were pleaded. And the judge inquired for Messere Ansaldo and said :

"Let him be brought here."

When he was come the judge said :

"Take thy pound of flesh wheresoever thou wilt, and accomplish the matter."

Wherefore the Jew had him stripped, and took a razor in his hand with which to do his deed.

And Messere Giannetto turned to the judge and said :

"Messere, I beseech you, forbid it."

The judge answered :

"Be at ease—the pound of flesh is yet to be cut."

Then the Jew drew near Ansaldo, and the judge said :

"Beware how thou doest it. For if thou takest either more or less than thy pound thou shalt lose thy head. Moreover, I tell thee, if thou takest one drop of blood I will have thee die for it. For of the shedding of blood the bond makes no mention. To thee it gives one pound of flesh alone, and neither more nor less. Therefore, if thou art prudent, thou wilt look well to what thou doest."

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And he sent for the headsman, the block, and the axe, and he said :

"If I see one little drop of blood, thine head falls."

Terror began to strike the Jew, and Messere Giannetto began to rejoice.

After many words the Jew said :

"Sir judge, you have outdone me. Command that the hundred thousand ducats be given me, and I will content me therewith."

The judge replied :

"I decree that thou shalt take thy pound of flesh according to the bond ; for not one penny shalt thou receive of me. The money thou shouldst have taken when I was willing to award it."

The Jew then asked but four and then three score thousand, but the judge held yet more firmly to his decree.

Messere Giannetto said to the judge :

"Give what he demands, and let him deliver Messere Ansaldo."

The judge said :

"Leave this to me, as I bid you."

Thereupon the Jew said :

"Give me fifty thousand."

The judge answered :

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"Not one sorry penny shalt thou receive."

To which the Jew rejoined :

"Give me at least my ten thousand ducats, and accursed be the air you breathe and the land you live in."

The judge said :

"Hast thou not heard ? I will give thee nothing. Take the pound of flesh if so be thou wilt take it. If thou wilt not take it, thy bond is cancelled and annulled."

At this everyone who was there present made the greatest rejoicings, and they all mocked the Jew, saying :

"He thought to ensnare others and he is himself taken in his net."

The Jew, seeing that he could not have his will, possessed with sudden fury took the bond and tore it into pieces, and thus Messere Ansaldo was liberated, and with great joy Messere Giannetto led him back to his own house. Then, quickly, he took those hundred thousand ducats and sought the judge, whom he found in a room making ready for his departure. To him Messere Giannetto said :

"Messere, no greater service can any man render me than this that you have done. Therefore I beg that you will take these moneys with you, for truly you have well earned them."

The judge replied :

"Messere Giannetto, my friend, I thank you well, but of these I have no need. Take them with you, so that my lady, your wife, shall not say that your store was ill husbanded."

Messere Giannetto answered :

"Upon my faith, she is so magnanimous, so courteous, and so gracious a lady, that had I expended four times these moneys she would have been well pleased, for she would have had me take a far greater sum."

The judge replied :

“ How does she content you ? ”

Messere Giannetto answered :

“ There is nothing in all the whole world that I love above her. She is as wise and as fair as wise and fair may be. And if you are minded thus far to honour me and to come where she is, you will have cause to marvel—such great courtesy she will show to you—and then you shall see plainly that all is as I say, and that I say too little.”

The judge said :

“ To go with you I may not, for I am otherwise bound ; but since of her excellence you so speak, when you see her salute her from me.”

Messere Giannetto said :

“ This I will do ; but I pray you take the money.”

While they thus spoke together, the judge, seeing a ring upon his hand, said :

“ This ring I will receive at your hands, but nought else.”

Messere Giannetto answered :

“ Be it so ; but I do it unwillingly, for my lady herself gave it unto me, and bade me wear it always for her love. And if she sees it not, she will believe I have bestowed it on some other woman, and she will be offended with me, and think that I love some other one than her. And truly she is dearer to me than my own life.”

The judge said :

“ And I, on my part, am certain that she loves you so well that she will believe your word that you have given the ring to me. But perhaps you desire to bestow it on some old love here in Venice ? ”

Messere Giannetto answered :

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"So great is the love I bear her that for no woman in the world would I change—so wholly fair is she."

With this he drew the ring from his finger and gave it to the judge; and they embraced one another in all courtesy.

Then the judge said :

"One favour I pray of thee."

Messere Giannetto replied :

"Say on."

The judge said :

"Do not tarry here, but go quickly back to your wife."

Messere Giannetto said :

"To me it seems a hundred thousand years till I see her."

So they took leave one of the other. The judge embarked in the name of God, and Messere Giannetto made feasts and banquets, and gave gifts of horses and money to his friends. After a few days he said farewell to all the Venetians, and took with him Messere Ansaldo and many of his old companions. And all the men and women bewailed his departure, so dear was he become to them by reason of his gracious bearing towards everyone.

Thus he betook him to Belmonte.

Now the lady had been there already some little while, but she made semblance that she was but then returned from some baths. She put on her own robes, and made great preparations to celebrate Giannetto's coming. The streets were hung with tapestries, and many companies of soldiers wore their festival array. And when Messere Giannetto and Messere Ansaldo landed, all her barons and her whole court went forth to meet them, crying :

"Long live our lord Giannetto !"

When they were come to the shore the lady hastened to

greet Messere Ansaldo, but with Giannetto, whom she loved better than herself, she feigned offence.

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So with joustings and tiltings, with dances and songs, all the damsels and ladies and knights who were there observed great rejoicings. But Giannetto, seeing that his wife did not show him that glad countenance which she was used to show, entered within his chamber and called her and said :

“ How is it with thee ? ” and he would have kissed her.

The lady said :

“ I have no need of these caresses of thine, when I know well that in Venice thou hast returned to thine old loves.”

Messere Giannetto began to excuse himself, but the lady demanded :

“ Where is the ring I gave thee ? ”

Messere Giannetto replied :

“ That which I foresaw has happened. I said well that thou wouldst think evil of it. But I swear to thee, upon my faith in God and in thee, that I gave this ring to the judge who won our cause for me.”

The lady said :

“ And I swear to thee, by the faith I bear to God and to thee, that thou didst give it to a woman. This I know, do not shame thee with forswearing thyself.”

Messere Giannetto rejoined :

“ I pray God that He will undo me utterly in this world if it is not the truth I tell thee. And more—I gave it only when he demanded it from me.”

The lady answered :

“ Thou shouldst have better stayed in Venice, and sent Messere Ansaldo here alone, and then thou mightest have taken thy pleasure with thine old loves. It is told me they all wept at thy departing.”

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Messere Giannetto began to weep and was sorely troubled, saying :

“Thou takest as gospel that which is not, nor could be, true.”

Then the lady, at the sight of his tears, felt her own heart pierced with them, and running to him she threw her arms about him, and with great gladness, laughing, she showed him the ring, and told him all that had been, and how she was herself the judge with whom he had spoken, and how it was to her he had given it.

And Messere Giannetto was above all measure astonished, and seeing it was the truth, he was glad exceedingly. And coming forth he told all the barons and all his companions. Moreover, for this cause, the love between the two grew and redoubled itself.

Afterwards Messere Giannetto called that waiting-woman who had bidden him drink no wine the night he won his wife, and gave her in marriage to Messere Ansaldo, and they spent the rest of their lives in joy and felicity.

IV.

THE HOUSE OF THE LEPERS.

Masuccio, "Il Novellino," Part IV., Novel XXXI.

Two fair lovers fly together. Straying from the path in a sudden tempest they chance upon a hospital of lepers, where, the lover being slain by the lepers, the girl of her own free will slays herself upon his dead body.

FAME, the most true chronicler of old stories, records that, at the time when the Maid of Orleans called the realm of France to arms, there dwelt in the city of Nancy—then the principal and noblest city of the duchy of Lorraine—two very magnanimous and valorous gentlemen. One of these was called the Lord of Condi, the other Sire Jannes de Bruscie, and both held lordship over certain of the castles and hamlets which were round about the city.

Upon my lady of Condi fortune had bestowed one only daughter, whose name was Martina. She was fairer of form and of countenance than any other throughout all that country. And in all the ways of her early maidenhood she was very gracious and praiseworthy. To Sire Jannes likewise but one son was left of many children who had been born to him. He was called Lois, and was wellnigh of one age with Martina. He was of valorous heart and very fair, loving good and hating ill deeds.

Between the two houses of these barons there was a far-off kinship. And the old friendship and fellowship of their ancestors, growing even greater as it was handed down from generation to generation, had become so close a bond that, over and above the continual sojournings of one with another,

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they held their vassals and all their goods so much in common that they scarcely knew the possessions of one from those belonging to the other. When Lois was grown to manhood, it happened that seeing Martina constantly, and being often her companion, the youth and the girl found that either loved the other, although none else suspected or was aware thereof. And from within and from without the fire of love so kindled their hearts, that neither the one nor yet the other could find any rest save when they talked and took their pastimes together—love and the blossoming time of their youth leading them on. Thus in such love-pastimes they spent the years of their youth in all felicity; and both were innocent of any ill-doing.

Moreover, albeit the boy and girl were fain to attain to love's fullest joy, nevertheless love, in the heart of Lois, was wise, and he refrained him from any folly, lest thereby reproach should fall upon Martina, and shame upon her house. Nor was he minded ever to hold her for his love unless it might be given him to win her for his wedded wife. And many a time he spoke thereof with Martina, and made known to her his unchangeable and loyal desire. And she, who was thereby greatly pleased, full often bade him be of good cheer, saying that by some faithful messenger their desires might be disclosed to her father and to his.

So Lois, whose whole pleasure was hers, by the mouth of his own father made very courteous request concerning their marriage to the Sire de Condi. But he, after he had given many and grave reasons, wholly refused his consent. Moreover, in temperate and prudent fashion, he prayed Sire Jannes that henceforth, for the security of their common honour, their children should meet together but seldom, and that Lois should only if called by some urgent necessity enter his house.

In this manner not only was their marriage prohibited, but also their companionship was on all sides disallowed.

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When they learnt this, full many were the complaints of these two lovers, and it were long and needless to tell how bitterly they lamented themselves and how their hearts were desolated with burning sighs. Yet, above all other grievous thoughts, the thought that it was solely by reason of his own upright and loyal dealing that this ill had overtaken them, was most grievous to Lois. So great indeed was his distress that he himself knew not what chain still fettered his soul to his most miserable body.

Nevertheless, he resolved to send a letter to Martina by the hand of some faithful messenger, and to beseech her, if any way was manifest to her which might avail for their succour, to advise him thereof. This letter, when it was written, he despatched to her with what precaution he might.

The girl, left meanwhile to commune with her own thoughts, had in the greatness of the overwhelming grief she suffered shown plainly the greatness of her soul. When she saw the messenger, with sorrowful face she took the letter and read it; albeit, from sadness of heart and because means failed her, she could write no reply. But she spoke thus in answer to him who was the secret bearer of the letter :

“Thou, to whom alone is known our hidden and boundless passion, greet him from whom thou comest, and say to him that either he shall be my husband and the only lord of this my life, or that I truly, with steel or the venom of poison, will with my own hand drive forth my soul from its wretched tenement. And although loyalty triumphed in him, and caused him to place the honour of my father’s house above the happiness of love and youth—whereby he changed our fair delights into silence and separation—yet if his heart serves

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him thereto, say thus to him from me. Bid him come, bringing with him some few chosen companions, below the walls of our castle to the foot of my chamber window. And let him provide a ladder of cords and all else needful, whereby I may climb down. Forthwith I will come to him, and together we will seek the castle of some one amongst our common kinsmen, and there we will duly perform the rites of our espousals. When this is known to my father, if it pleases him, it is well. And if it pleases him not, it will still be done. So will he follow the usage of wise men, and what he was impotent to refuse he will liberally allow. If to this deed thy master is disposed, let him accomplish it, with no delay, this very night, according to the manner I have set forth to thee."

The faithful servant listened diligently to the message he should carry back, and likewise they agreed upon a sure token, which being exchanged that night should guard them from any deception. Then he departed from Martina, and coming to his master repeated point by point all she had bidden him say. Nor did Lois need that any man should urge him to the enterprise, but immediately he summoned about twenty valiant and hardy youths, his vassals and retainers, and set in order all things needful.

When night had come, they took the road quietly and with no noise to the castle of the Lord of Condi. The distance was not very great, and in a brief space of time he and his companions found themselves beneath the window of Martina's chamber, as she had directed, and gave the signal agreed on. This she, keeping fearful watch above, heard, and quickly threw down a strong cord. To this Lois fastened the ladder, and she drew it up to her and attached the hooks of iron very firmly to the window's ledge. Then, without delay, as one well practised already in the act, she descended.

With innumerable kisses Lois caught her in his arms, and he led her to the street, where was a fair horse they had brought, and set her upon it, and they rode away, a guide leading them by the road they had to take. And with great rejoicings the serving-men went with them, some going in front and some following after them by the same path.

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But their contrarious fate had otherwise resolved. To an end more bitter and more terrible than had ever yet been heard of, it conducted these two lovers. For they had not yet gone a thousand paces upon their way when a great rain-storm broke upon them. The rain fell with no intermission and with blasts of adverse winds. And there were dense sheets of hail, and such fearful thunderings and lightning, that it seemed as if the whole framework of the world was about to be shattered. The darkness became a thick blackness, and the tempest molested them so fiercely that those who were on foot, together with the guide, flying one here, one there, strayed from the track. Moreover, the two lovers, albeit they held one another fast by the hand, could scarcely discern each other's face. They knew not where was the place, nor did they know what road to follow. They could see nought of their companions, and although with loud and frequent cries they called upon them, they could not hear any answer. So, commending themselves to God, they cast their bridles upon the necks of the horses and let them carry them whither they would, abandoning themselves and their lives to chance.

Having ridden thus for many a mile, like shipwrecked vessels without steersman or rudder, and wandering hither and thither, driven by cruel death towards their last agony, they saw at length a long way off a little light burning. Whereat they took some hope to themselves, and despite the tempest, which was in no ways abated, they guided their

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horses towards the light. After a long time, when they had reached the place where they had seen it burning, they came to a house, and they knocked at the entrance of the house. When they had made their knocking heard the door was opened to them, and they found that they had come to a House of Lepers.

With little goodwill some of the hideous inmates came forth towards them, and demanded what had brought them there at such an hour.

The youth and the girl were so exhausted and spent, that their voices failed them. But Lois made answer in as few words as might be, that the violence of the tempest and their adverse fortunes were the causes of their coming. And he prayed them that, for the love of God, they would afford them some warmth, and give shelter to their spent horses.

The lepers, who bore as it were the semblance of those who are accursed and destitute of all hope of redemption, and in whom no loving-kindness nor any charity abode, were yet moved with some faint pity. They aided the two to dismount, and lodging the horses in the stalls where their asses were stabled, they led Lois and Martina into the kitchen, and seated themselves with them upon the hearth around a great fire. And although the two had the companionship of these disfigured and blemished people in abhorrence, yet having no other choice they strove each to reassure the other.

The warmth of the fire soon availed to restore their despoiled loveliness to Lois and Martina. Their beauty was so great that it seemed as if they had stolen their forms from Narcissus and Diana. And it came to pass that an evil thought entered the mind of one of the lepers. He was a vile wretch, a soldier who had been discharged in the past war, and he was more wicked and corrupt than any of

his fellows. This man resolved to compass the death of Martina's lover, so that she might never depart from amongst them.

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Having firmly determined to commit this wickedness, he confided his intention to one of his comrades, a man, like himself, depraved and inhuman. And they went out together to the stalls, and one of them unloosed the horses and made a great clamour, crying :

"Gentle sir, come and quiet your horses, that our asses may not be injured."

Meanwhile the other posted himself behind the door of the stable, and he held a great hatchet in his hand, waiting to accomplish this foul murder.

Lois, hearing himself thus called, although it seemed to him a hard matter to quit the fire and go forth, nevertheless with feeble steps took his way towards the stable, leaving Martina alone in the company of many of the lepers, both men and women, who were within.

He had but reached the first of the stalls when the savage wretch who awaited him dealt him so heavy a blow, that without being able to give one single cry Lois fell dead upon the ground. And albeit they saw that he was indeed slain, they wounded him with many another ruthless stroke.

Then they left him, and they returned to the house where the unhappy Martina remained. And these men, who held some authority over their companions, commanded that all who were there should depart, each one to his own place, to repose. And thus—as they commanded—it was done.

The miserable girl without ceasing demanded that Lois should come to her, but no answer was given. Then at length the murderer came to her, and he stood before her and with hoarse and broken voice he said :

“ Daughter mine, take to thyself patience, for forth from this house thou goest no more. Thy lover we have but now slain; therefore in him thou canst have no hope of succour.”

Hearing his words, with a loud cry she cast herself against the wall, and many and many a time she swooned. Then coming to herself, terror-stricken and broken-hearted with grief, her delicate face bruised and wounded, she knew that for her there was no remedy nor any help. So, all unafraid, she swiftly resolved that as in life she had followed Lois, her beloved, so in death likewise she would bear him company. She turned herself to those fierce men and said :

“ Oh, pitiless and inhuman hearts, for the sake of the one God I entreat you, that having robbed me of my life’s only treasure, you will at least grant to me this one grace, and suffer me for a little space to look upon his dead body, and with my bitter weeping wash from his face the stain of the blood.”

The thought of that which the girl was about to do was far from the minds of the lepers, and they were willing, as it was her pleasure, in this matter to grant her request. Therefore they led her out to the place where the unfortunate Lois lay.

When Martina saw him a frenzy as of madness fell upon her. With a cry which reached to the skies she abandoned herself wholly to her grief, and she cast herself down beside him, and took her full measure of tears and of kisses. And she held ready to her hand a small cord wherewith to execute her purpose. But seeing the dagger of her lover, which they had left lying at his side, she thought by it to find a yet swifter and shorter road for the fulfilment of her desire.

So secretly she took the dagger, and hiding it between herself and the dead body of Lois, she said :

“ Now, when the steel is prepared to pierce my heart, I call on thee, O gracious soul of this my lord ! O soul of his, who but now with violence didst quit his stricken body, I pray thee that it will not be burthensome to thee to tarry a little while for mine, which of its own free will is about to follow thee. Here may our eternal loves, kindled by twin flames, meet and be joined fast together. And if to our earthly life joy was denied, and the manifestation of this our sole love was refused, I here desire for ever to unite my soul with thee, and that mine, forsaking life, may possess thee eternally. And to thee, O most noble and best beloved body, I offer the sacrifice and espousal of this my earthly body, which hastening after thee whithersoever thou wentest, not in delight but as a victim slain, I do now keep for thy oblation. So let our life-blood, as the funeral incense which at solemn burials is offered up, be mingled in this vile place.”

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Having thus spoken, although she craved longer to bewail and lament, though many other piteous words she was fain to utter, yet remembering the deed she had it in her heart to do, dexterously she set the dagger's hilt upon the breast of the dead body, and the sharp point she rested straight against her own heart. Then without any shrinking or dismay she thrust herself against the point, and let the cold steel trans-pierce her heart, crying :

“ Ah ! pitiless hounds, take—thus—thy prey.” Thus casting her arms about her lover she departed from this dolorous life.

Hardly had the men heard those her last words, when they saw more than a hand's breadth of the steel which pierced her through. And they were stricken to the heart, and fearing for their own lives they made a deep pit in the

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[Such was the sorrowful and most cruel death of these two, which story I with mournful pen have inscribed.]

And after fierce and deadly war had been between their two houses—and many people had therein been slain—it chanced that (the justice of God requiring that so great a crime should not go unavenged, but that punishment should follow the murderers) those lepers became at enmity one with another. Then one amongst them disclosed that which had there befallen.

Which when the two barons heard, they with one accord sent to the leper-house, and the grave was opened, and therein were found the bodies of the noble and hapless lovers, with the dagger between them witnessing to their piteous and cruel deaths.

Having taken the bodies from that vile place, they laid them in a wooden chest and carried them forth, and the leper-house was burned to the ground.

Then the bodies being taken to the city of Nancy, they were mourned by all with common lamentation. And they were buried in one tomb with pious and solemn rites. And the following words were written in remembrance of these two miserable lovers: “Envious fortune and evil fate led the two lovers here sepulchred to a cruel death. Weep and lament for them all ye who read.”

V.

THE FALCON-KEEPER.

Masuccio, "Il Novellino," Part V., Novel XCIII.

Messer Mazzeo Protojudice finds his daughter with Antonio Marcello, who flies unrecognized. The father sends his daughter to be slain, but the servants, taking pity upon her, set her at liberty. Dressed as a youth she arrives at the court of the Duke of Calabria. She comes back with the duke to Salerno, and is lodged in the house of her lover. She finds that her father has left Antonio all his inheritance. Making herself known to him, he takes her for his wife.

THERE once dwelt at Salerno a peerless cavaliere of an ancient and noble race called Messer Mazzeo Protojudice. He surpassed all his fellow-countrymen in his great riches and in his other notable possessions.

Now it happened that, being already a man far on in years, his wife died, leaving him one only daughter named Veronica, and she was both very fair and good and gracious of heart. And because of her gentleness, and because also he had no other child—or, it might be, for that he sought to wed her in some high estate—he loved her so well that ever he kept her with him in his own house unwedded, albeit many had sought to make her their wife.

It chanced that a noble youth, Antonio Marcello by name, had from his childhood upwards, under pretext of some kinship with Messer Mazzeo's wife, frequented his house continually. Upon him Veronica had so set her love that all peace departed from her. Now Antonio was wise of heart, and he was very loyal; moreover, Messer Mazzeo loved him as though he had been his own son. Nevertheless, he at

length coming to the knowledge of the great love she bore him, the flame of a kindred passion was lit within him, nor, being young, could he find strength to repel the shafts of love which pierced his breast. So it fell out that secretly he took her for his love.

Thus, for a little while, dealing in hidden and heedful wise, they continued together in exceeding felicity.

Yet was all their care in vain to remedy that great shipwreck of their joy that envious fortune held in store for them. For being once alone together with no suspicion of ill, by an unlooked-for chance they were discovered by a servant belonging to the household. He forthwith brought the cavaliere word thereof, who, transported with rage, went to the place where they were, with a band of his men, to seize them unaware.

Nevertheless, Antonio, who was valorous and of a courageous spirit, broke from their hold, and with his sword in his hand he forced them to give place, and without being recognized by any, he made his way, unwounded, back to his own house.

Messer Mazzeo remained struck to his heart, seeing that the matter was thus ended; and he demanded that Veronica should tell him who the youth was who had escaped him. She, judging that her father would not willingly burden the years of his old age with her death, but that, at any cost he would exempt her from punishment (if by any means he could), resolved, notwithstanding, that the life of her lover should be dearer to her than her own. Therefore she made answer, at the last, that far rather she would suffer any torments—yea, death itself—than reveal her lover's name.

Whereat the fury of her father was kindled to greater

rage, and he delivered her over to be tortured with many torments. But seeing that she stood firm in her denial, he, albeit his natural affections would have restrained him, nevertheless at the end was sternly minded that she should die. And refusing even so much as to look upon her face he commanded two of his most trusted servants that that very night they should take a boat, and, dragging her with them, should go many miles out to sea, and there they should cast her forth that she might die.

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They obeyed his decree, albeit very unwillingly, quickly bound her, and led her to the seashore. Yet, as they were about to make ready the boat, one of them was moved with pity, and he spoke thereof to his companion, to whom this cruel deed was no less irksome, and they were agreed together. And debating one with the other they resolved, with common accord, that she should not die, even if it cost them their lives. Nor were they only determined to give her life, but also to set her at liberty.

So having unbound her, they told her how being stirred by compassion they were not minded to execute the pitiless sentence her father had bidden them carry out. But for sake of this service done to her, they prayed her that, remembering the benefit she had received at their hands, she would exile herself from that country, so that her father might never have knowledge of the matter.

The poor girl thus learning that her life was granted to her by these her own servants, for a long space of time gave them many thanks. And these thanks seeming to her all too small a recompense for so great a kindness, she prayed the Rewarder of all good deeds to repay them this service, beyond measure, that they had rendered her. Then for a little while she gave way to the terrors and fears she had suffered, and

after that she promised, swearing by the mercy they had shown to her, that she would act in such a manner that neither her ruthless father nor any other living soul should ever know that she was still alive.

Therefore she cut off all her hair, and as well as she could she let them dress her in the guise of a boy, and they gave her some of their own clothes and the little money that they had with them, and setting her upon the road that led to Naples, with many tears they took leave of her.

When they were come back to their lord they showed him her dress, and affirmed that they had drowned her, with a great stone fastened round her neck, many miles away out to sea.

The wretched girl, who never before had been outside the walls of the city, felt her courage sink at every step upon the road at the thought that she was leaving Antonio, and that with no hope that she would ever again behold him. And many vain thoughts passed through her mind impelling her to go back. Yet because of the kindness she had received, and remembering the promise she had given, gratitude, the flower of grace, was so strong within her that she drove from her all contrary inclinations.

And thus, unaccustomed to such lonely journeyings, she went upon her way, commending herself to God and going she knew not whither. And all the remaining hours of the night she journeyed onwards in this her exceedingly great trouble of mind.

When the daybreak was come she found herself near by Nocera. There she fell into the fellowship of some companions who were journeying to Naples. Amongst these was a Calabrian gentleman who was carrying certain falcons to the Duke of Calabria. The girl seemed to him of very

fair aspect, and he asked her whither she was going and if she was willing to take service with him.

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In the days of her childhood Veronica by imitating an old Apulian woman had learnt many words and phrases of that manner of speech, and now it came to her mind to make use thereof. So she answered :

“Messer, I was born in Apulia, and I left my home for no other reason than to take service. But being of gentle birth I would not willingly take any base office upon me.”

The Calabrian said :

“How would it please you to have the charge of one of these falcons ? ”

To Veronica such a demand was above all others welcome. For in the house of her father she had taken the charge of not one, but many falcons, and was greatly skilled therein. So she replied that from her childhood upwards she had been exercised in no other craft.

Wherefore, after some further speech as they journeyed on, it was agreed that the care of one of the falcons should be given to her.

When they were come to Naples, her master having given her fresh array, she bore in very truth the semblance of a fair and comely squire. And whether it were predestined by fate, or because she was so fair of face, when the falcons were brought to the presence of the duke nothing would serve him but that he should have, not only the birds, but likewise the keeper who was so well practised in their management. This was accordingly done, and Veronica became one of his household, with a Neapolitan gentleman for her comrade. And so uprightly she bore herself, and so well she wrought in his service, that in no long time she won the goodwill of her lord, and he did her honour as one of his best loved servants.

Thus she abode in his house, his favour towards her ever increasing, until it pleased fortune to direct her destiny into another path.

Now the story concerning her having become known generally to the people of Salerno, her father remained overwhelmed with unendurable grief. For the most part he shut himself into his house alone, or sometimes, solitary and disconsolate, he dwelt in a villa without the city.

Then Antonio, who with bitter and scalding tears had wept and wept again over his dead Veronica, set himself by secret means to discover if his name had been revealed to Messer Mazzeo. But when some days had gone by, finding that Messer Mazzeo was still ignorant thereof, Antonio, in part that he might avert all suspicion, and in part moved by compassion, visited him at his villa, and this he did continually, showing his affection towards him most tenderly. And many times he bore him company outside the city, in all things making manifest his submission and devotion, obeying him as though he were his own son.

To Messer Mazzeo this was beyond all things dear; for it appeared to him that by Antonio alone he had never been forsaken. And therefore, and also because the youth was good and gracious in his eyes, he loved him as if he were the child of his own blood. And it came to pass that his dependence upon him was so great that he would not suffer him out of his sight even for one hour's space.

Antonio abiding constant in this obedience, and serving him continually with love and reverence, there arose in the mind of the cavaliere a desire to make Antonio, during his lifetime his son by adoption, and after his death to bequeath all he had to him—robbed as he was by adverse chance of any other heir. Being confirmed in this desire, he made his last

and final will, leaving Antonio sole inheritor of his possessions both in lands and wealth, and shortly after he departed from this present life.

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Antonio thus having dominion over so great an inheritance, was drawn back to revisit the house which had been the cavaliere's own home. And there was no place therein where he did not weep and with sighs bewail himself for sad remembrance of his dead lady. And calling continually to mind how rather than reveal his name she had chosen death, he was as it were made captive to that sacrifice of her love: and looking upon those things which once had been Veronica's, within himself he ordained and decreed that other wife than her he would never wed.

Matters stood with Antonio thus when it fell out that the duke whom Veronica served resolved to journey into Calabria. This his intent was full welcome to Veronica, because thereby she would not alone see once again her own country, but might there acquire some tidings concerning her lover, and likewise of her father, whom she could never, by any manner of means, find it in her heart to hate.

Of how it fared with them she knew nought, nor had she dared ask any news lest thereby she might be discovered.

When they were come to Salerno, the company of the duke's retinue which he had brought with him, were lodged in divers houses according to each man's rank and condition.

Then it happened—fortune so willing it—that by an unforeseen ordinance it fell to the lot of Antonio Marcello to entertain the falcon-keeper with her companion. Whereat Veronica rejoiced exceedingly. And Antonio received them most honourably, and made much of them. And that same evening he prepared a very costly supper, and the banquet

was spread in that very chamber where he had been most often rejoiced by the presence of his dear lady.

Beholding his guests Antonio looked now upon one and now upon the other very attentively. And it seemed to him that the similitude of his lady rose before him, and therewith the remembrance of her living and the memory of her death came into his mind, and his words were accompanied with heavy sighs.

Thus it was Veronica saw herself lodged in her own house. And although to find her true lover lord of all was a joy transcending every other joy in her eyes, yet seeing neither her father nor any others of his household whom she had known, constrained by tender piety she was full fain to hear somewhat concerning them, while yet she feared to ask. Therefore all bewildered she sat at supper.

Presently her companion questioned Antonio concerning the coat-of-arms blazoned in the banquet-hall, and asked if they were his. To which Antonio answered no, but that they belonged to a very noble knight, named Messer Mazzeo Protojudice, who, being left childless in his old age, had made him the inheritor of all his possessions. Wherefore as his adopted son he had taken not only the lands, but also the name and the arms, as though Messer Mazzeo had been indeed his father.

Veronica, hearing these tidings, was so overwhelmed with the unexpected gladness that she could scarcely restrain herself from weeping. Yet, that the feast might not be interrupted thereby, she withheld herself. But when supper was at an end, it seemed to the girl that the time had come, and that with open arms she might at length receive the happiness which appertained to her—kind fortune having preserved it for her until that hour. So she took Antonio

by the hand, and leaving her companion in the other chamber, she led him to a room apart. There striving in vain to say the words she had it in her mind to speak—being fain to try whether by any manner of means he would recognize her—utterance failed her, and for sorrow and joy of heart she was not able so much as to open her lips. And faint with gladness she let herself fall upon his breast, saying :

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“ Oh, Antonio mine ! can it be that thou dost not know me ? ”

He who had seemed to see in her some semblance of Veronica, hearing those words was well assured it was indeed herself, and overmastered by exceeding tenderness he cried :

“ Alas, dear heart of mine ! dost thou yet live ? ”

This said, with no other word, for a long space of time he held her in his arms. When they had come to themselves each told the other in part what had befallen them. Then, Antonio becoming aware that the time was at hand to disclose the truth, he made clear to her what he forthwith intended to do. So they returned from that chamber to her companion, and Antonio, the hour being late, immediately sent out a messenger to summon the kinsmen of their two houses, bidding them come straightway to his house upon affairs of great moment.

They being quickly come, when they were assembled together, Antonio prayed them that they would accompany him to the palace of the lord of the city, because he was purposed, with their favour, to petition the duke to reinstate him in possession of a noble fief which had once pertained to Messer Mazzeo, of which he being ignorant had hitherto received no benefit, but had left it to be held by others.

And all that company willingly went with him.

Then he being come into the presence of his lord, took

Veronica by the hand, and in the hearing of all who were gathered together there, they recounted, verily and indeed, point by point, the whole story of what had been, declaring that from their first love they had either taken the other in espousal for husband and wife—and this by the pledge of their faith and by mutual consent. Moreover, that now it was their will, before the eyes of all men, and by leave of him, their lord, solemnly to carry this marriage into effect.

The duke and his barons and their common kinsmen, as well as the other men of the city, were astonished, listening to their words, for it seemed to them a strange thing to hear. Nevertheless, all were well pleased that thus it had a good and honourable ending. And everyone marveling, commended the deeds done by Antonio and the goodness of Veronica. And the duke sent them back to their own house with great delight, and in the morning he caused a mass to be celebrated with high ceremonial in his presence and in that of many other lords and of much common people. And to the general content of the men of Salerno, Veronica and Antonio were solemnly espoused, and many rich gifts were bestowed upon them; and in felicity and wealth, loving one another with exceeding love, and with many fair children born to them, they passed the rest of their lives.

VI.

THE PRICE OF MADONNA LAURA.

Masuccio, "Il Novellino," Part V., Novel XLV.

Madonna Laura deceives and defrauds a Castilian scholar. Leaving Avignon, where she lives, he meets with her husband, and recounts to him his misadventure. The husband prevails on him to return to Avignon, and the money he has lost is restored to him.

THERE was once a noble Castilian youth named Alfonso da Toledo. He was a scholar of the law, and the fame of the ancient and renowned school of Bologna having reached his ears he was thereby moved in his own mind to betake himself thither. For he desired greatly to accomplish his studies in that famous city, and to obtain an honourable degree in the learning of its university.

Now Alfonso was young, and also of ready wit and an honourable life. Moreover, above and beyond these things, his father, a knight of great repute, had in dying left him heir to all his wealth. So Alfonso, desirous forthwith to carry out his praiseworthy intent, made himself ready to set forth, and he provided himself with fair apparel and with costly books; also he was well furnished with goodly horses and a befitting retinue, and he took one thousand florins of gold in his purse. Thus, taking horse with the serving-men of his company, he took the road to Italy.

After several days' journeying he had passed beyond the boundaries of his own country of Castile, and had also traversed the adjacent kingdom of Catalonia. Then, being come into the realm of France, he came one night to the city

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of Avignon, where, either in order that he might take rest for himself and his horses, they being spent with travelling, or for some other cause, he resolved to take up his abode for the space of a few days.

Being lodged at the inn, the next morning, attended by some of his servants, he went forth to view the city. And passing from street to street, it chanced, as his ill fortune decreed, that he saw a fair woman who stood at the window of a house. She was young, and her beauty was very great, insomuch that it seemed to him that he had never set his eyes upon any who could equal her in fairness of feature. And so much pleasure did he take in her beauty, and after so vehement a manner was he possessed by it, that before he departed from the spot where he had first had sight of her face, he was overmastered by the desire to win her favour. And no argument nor reasoning would have sufficed to turn his mind from this folly.

For which cause, setting aside all wiser thoughts, he determined never to quit Avignon until he had wholly or in part prevailed upon her to bestow her love upon him.

In these and such matters it happened that the lady was well skilled and practised. So, as the youth passed to and fro continually before her house, she quickly understood what had befallen him. And ordering all things thereto, she dealt in such a fashion that the passion of the unhappy youth so increased upon him that it would indeed have been a hard matter for him to turn aside from its pursuit. This she soon perceived, and seeing that he was very young, and also judging from his apparel and retinue that he was both nobly born and very rich, she proposed within herself at one first stroke to deceive and rob him, as far as it lay in her power, of all his possessions.

So she sought some means by which the youth might come to speech with her. And she did as ships do when, being becalmed at sea, they send a boat ashore to gather fuel. For, after setting an old woman, well practised and expert in the trade, awhile at the window to do her business (where he might well perceive that it was she), she then sent her forth from her house. And the youth, who desired nought else but that he might speak with her, joined himself quickly with the old woman, and entered into speech with her; and before they parted either had learnt from the other, with but little pains, those things each secretly desired to know.

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Then the woman returned to the house of her mistress, and after many messages taken and brought back, they were at length agreed that the lady, whose name was Madonna Laura, should expect the youth at a certain hour that same evening, and that he should be admitted to her house, and that she would henceforth entertain him as her lover. Moreover, it was agreed that he should bring with him the thousand golden florins, which was all the riches he had. And thus, according to this agreement on either side, it was that night done.

When the next day was come Messere Alfonso returned to his lodging at the inn. And all that day he waited impatiently for the evening to come. And when it was come, at the same hour as before he again sought the door of Madonna Laura's house, and he gave many times and often the signal by which she had given him admittance. But this time the only reply to his summons was silence. Nor was any other answer vouchsafed to him. Then all too late he understood how at one and the same time he had lost his lady, his honour, and his wealth.

So grieving to death he turned back and retraced his steps, nor could he find that night one single point on which his mind could rest without thoughts of pain and vexation.

When the new day was come, he sought one last proof of the deception which had been practised upon him, and once more he took his way to the house of Madonna Laura. There he found the doors and windows securely barred and fastened, and by this and by other plain tokens and signs it was made manifest to him, and plainly certified that he had without any doubt been fooled and betrayed by the subtlety and craft of an evil woman.

Then being again come to the inn where he and his company were lodged, he presently fell into such grief and despair of mind that more than once he was like to have stabbed himself to the heart. Nevertheless, from such a misdeed he refrained, and for dread lest that some second disaster and worse might befall him, he resolved to depart from that place. And his purse being empty, and not one single coin left to him wherewith to pay the keeper of the inn, he was perforce compelled to sell a beautiful mule of great value belonging to him. So having sold the beast, with the sum thus obtained he was able to satisfy the host of the inn, and with the few coins which remained over and above the price of his lodging he continued his journey towards Italy, taking the road which led through the country of Provence.

Thus he rode upon his way, still with many and bitter sighs lamenting his ill fortune continually, and within himself sorely vexed and tormented, bethinking him that he, whose intent had been to dwell at Bologna as a wealthy and noble student should, must now pawn and sell his possessions, and pursue his studies meanly as a poor scholar in that city. In this manner, travelling always in this perturbation

"Bring hither the thousand golden florins given unto thee by this youth, for which price thou didst sell my honour and thine own."

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Hearing these words it seemed to the woman that the roof of the house was shattered above her head, and making no answer she remained as one dumb before him.

Then the knight grew very stern, and taking his dagger in his hand, he said :

"Thou evil woman, if so be that thou dost not desire death, do with haste that I have bidden thee do."

She, beholding him fiercely stirred against her, knew that for denial there was no place. So with weeping and sore heaviness she sought for the gold, and she brought it and she cast the golden florins down upon the table. And the knight, turning them about, took from amongst them one. This he laid in the hand of the youth, who, oppressed with many fears, awaited from moment to moment the dagger's blow which should slay both him and her.

And the knight said to him :

"Messere Alfonso, it is right and just that for his labour each one shall receive due guerdon. And if my wife, who stands here, did bargain with thee for a dishonest price, she of right should be counted amongst those base women who do go about the city to give themselves for gold. And because such women, however fair, neither deserve nor obtain more than one single ducat, I desire and will that thou shouldst pay neither more nor less for the uttermost price of that which thou didst purchase."

Having thus said, he bade the woman receive the ducat from the hand of the youth, and thus it was done.

This being accomplished, the knight, perceiving that the youth dared not raise his eyes for shame and distress, and

they two were set at the table side by side. Then, when they had supped, and when all the serving-men were retired, and they were alone together, the knight asked Messere Alfonso concerning himself, who he was, and whither he was bound, and for what reason. And moreover he asked him, if he might with honour disclose it, what was the cause of this his exceeding melancholy.

Messere Alfonso, who could not speak one single word unaccompanied by heavy sighs, made answer to the knight's first demands in the briefest manner he was able; for his last question, he prayed his companion to forbear troubling him with any further interrogations.

But the knight, having learnt his name, and the cause for which he had left his own country, and knowing his father to have been a man of high and noble race and renown, was even more desirous than he had been before to discover what disaster had befallen the youth upon his journey which could have cast him into such distress of mind. So, he still questioning and the youth still refusing reply, it came to pass at length that Messere Alfonso, without more ado, recounted from beginning to end the story of his mischance. Moreover, he told the name of Madonna Laura, and point by point he narrated how she had dealt with him, and how, having found himself thus befooled and robbed of all his fortune, he had been so overcome with shame and grief that he had been near to ending his life with his own hands.

The knight remained struck to the heart at hearing these tidings, which he had been at so great pains to gain, having thus acquired that knowledge which he had neither sought nor believed in any guise possible. Moreover, it would be a hard matter to say how much his sorrow, listening, exceeded that of the scholar while he told his story, seeing that he

thereby knew how his honour had been lost. Nevertheless, being both a man of wise and ready counsel, he concealed the wellnigh intolerable pain he suffered, and, forcing back his grief, he deliberated within himself how it became him to bear him with regard to this matter, and, being resolved, he turned to the youth and said :

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“ My son, how ill and how unadvisedly thou hast ruled thyself, and how in the folly of thy youth thou hast let thyself be deceived and defrauded by a vile woman, thou hast given testimony with thine own mouth. And hold it for certain, that did I know my reproofs would in any whit avail or profit thee—even were we to pass the rest of our days together—I should never weary of upbraiding thee for this thy great folly. But as I see thee much more in need of succour than of reproach, I desire to let the sorrow thou hast for thy fault suffice for its punishment. Therefore I bid thee take comfort to thyself, and drive far from thee those thoughts, which are as the thoughts of madmen, of destroying thyself; inasmuch as I shall take it upon me to provide for thy welfare in none other wise than if thou wert mine own son. As thou seest, I am now on a journey, and am a stranger in this place, and have no present means of doing that which I intend to do. So thou must not mislike it if I ask thee to ride back with me a little way, seeing we are but a few days’ journey from my house. Then I will make thee able with good courage to continue thy journey, and thou shalt have all things needful for the accomplishment of thy first purpose. And this I do for sake of the renowned race from which thou art sprung, and because thou art a stranger in this land. Wherefore I will not suffer it that thou shouldst go to the school whither thou art bound carrying with thee such rash and desperate thoughts, and, moreover, by reason

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of thy poverty, that thou shouldst be unable to live nobly and befittingly."

The youth marvelled greatly at this high deed of charity, and as his trouble had been great so also were the thanks he rendered to the knight. And after some further speech together each went to seek repose in his own chamber.

The next morning, when it was still early, the youth and the knight and all belonging to their company took horse and set out upon the road which led back to France. And the knight leading them he guided them back by a way which brought them that same evening to Avignon. And being come thither, the knight laid his hand upon the youth and conducted him to the entrance of his own house.

Then the youth, seeing to what place he was come, knew the house. And Madonna Laura came forth with great waxen torches to meet her husband, and she greeted the knight with a show of joy. And all this Alfonso saw. Then suddenly he understood clearly what this signified, and to him it seemed he had been brought thither to die. So, all confused, and fearful of what should come, he sat as if unable to move upon his horse. Nevertheless, at the bidding of the knight he dismounted, and the knight led him by the hand into that same chamber where, not many hours before, he—for brief pleasure and unending loss—had been lodged.

Forthwith Madonna Laura recognized the youth, and she, guessing the mishap which had befallen her, was filled with terror and dismay. Now, supper being prepared, the woman trembling sat herself down with them at the table, and those three, each in their own grievous trouble of spirit, ate and drank together. But when the supper was come to an end, and they being at length alone, the knight turned himself to his wife, and said :

"Bring hither the thousand golden florins given unto thee by this youth, for which price thou didst sell my honour and thine own."

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Hearing these words it seemed to the woman that the roof of the house was shattered above her head, and making no answer she remained as one dumb before him.

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Having thus said, he bade the woman receive the ducat from the hand of the youth, and thus it was done.

This being accomplished, the knight, perceiving that the youth dared not raise his eyes for shame and distress, and

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deeming him more in lack of solace than of aught else, said to him :

“ My son, take hence thy ill-guarded and worse expended coins, and in days to come remember thee of this thy warning, and buy not such vile merchandise at so costly a price. And there, in the city where thou goest to acquire fame, honour, and renown for thy race, do not thou consume thy time and thy substance in ill-living. To-night I will molest thee no longer with words. Go to thy rest, and be secure—on the faith of a true knight—that I would rather suffer injury in my own person than entertain any thought of wronging thee or thine.”

And calling his servants he made Alfonso enter a richly furnished chamber made ready for his coming.

When this was done, before he too sought his couch, the knight bade prepare poison for the last sleeping-cup of his wife.

The next morning the knight commanded that a fair horse, with other costly and honourable gifts, should be given to Alfonso, and after they had partaken of a short repast, he himself accompanied the youth and his retinue some ten miles on the road from the city.

And the time being now come that they should part, he spake thus to him :

“ My well-beloved son, I am in no measure satisfied with having rendered thee thy life and thy possessions; therefore take likewise these my gifts, though they be of small account, time having failed me to prepare greater ones. And with this my horse replace the mule thou didst sell, and making use thereof remember me, whose desire is that henceforth thou shalt regard me as thy true father. And in every act and at all times as such thou shalt reckon me, and

I on my part will take thee as my only son, and while I live will deal with thee accordingly."

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Having spoken thus, he embraced the youth, who, for his exceeding gladness at so high a deed of honourable magnanimity, wept so many tears that for weeping he could find no words wherewith to give thanks. Seeing this, the knight bade him keep silence, and without either the one or the other bidding farewell they kissed, and parted. And the knight returned to the city, and Messere Alfonso went on his way to Bologna.

VII.

THE DEFEAT OF GRAZIA.

Cintio, "Gli Ecatommiti," Decade X., Novel VI.

Alonso Elismano gives his sister Andria as wife to Lope Sorringo. Grazia Mantiches, who loves her, filled with anger, challenges a duel with Lope. Andria enters the lists in her husband's place, and Grazia is overcome.

IN the stately city of Salamanca there once dwelt a very noble citizen named Alonso Elismano; this Alonso had one sister, whose name was Andria. And Andria was most fair to look upon; moreover, with this her exceeding beauty, she had likewise a brave and valorous heart.

Now near the same city there lived a youth called Grazia Mantiches, and he loved Andria with a vehement love and desired greatly to make her his wife. He was rich and also born of an honourable house, but his life was rather ruled by his rash and presumptuous passions than governed by any wisdom of mind. Thus it was that, albeit otherwise, for sake of his gentle birth and of his many possessions, Alonso might have been persuaded to bestow Andria upon him in marriage, nevertheless, for this cause, he refused Grazia's suit. For Alonso held, that in the matter of the girl's marriage, the worth of a man's own self should be weighed and judged of more account than any other thing. And, being of this opinion, he chose, in Grazia's place, to give her to another youth of fair and blameless report and of a good and loyal life—by name Lope Sorringo—although his wealth was less than the wealth of Grazia.

To Grazia it came much amiss that he should be set on

one side, and that Andria, whom he loved, should be wedded to another. Yet presently, considering in his own mind his great riches, and reflecting that all women alike are by nature easily entreated and lightly won, he consoled himself for his loss. For he bethought him that if he could not prevail upon her with prayers, he could—as with some ill women he had wrought according to his pleasure—at least purchase her love with gifts.

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But these evil thoughts of his were empty as air. Andria's whole desire was to live only for him who held her promised faith; nor could Grazia find any loophole for hope that he would ever, howsoever he strove thereto, gain any grace in her eyes, nor obtain any favour at her hands it was contrary to her honour to grant. When he understood this, he determined that, if he must forfeit his hope of her love, Lope should be despoiled in the possession of his joy.

So it fell out that being one day, together with Lope, in the company of some other noble youths of the country, they came into dispute one with another concerning the truth of some matter of which they spoke, and between Lope and Grazia word followed upon word, until Grazia, taking the opportunity the contention afforded him to accomplish his malicious intent, accused Lope that he had lied.

Lope, hearing these words, forthwith laid his hand upon his sword, and drawing it he would have fought with Grazia even in that very place where they stood. But those who were their companions interposed, and, parting the two youths by force, compelled them for that time to relinquish the contest.

But Grazia said to him:

“Whensoever and wheresoever it may seem good to

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thee to do that which becomes the honour of a knight, I shall be ready prepared to measure myself against thee. And, as I would not have men say I gave thee the lie first that I might have the advantage over thee, choose thou the weapons with which it best pleaseth thee to fight. Then it shall be open to both the one and the other of us twain to show forth what valour is in him."

This challenge Lope accepted from Grazia, and, full of anger and sorely vexed, he betook himself home to his own house.

Now when he was come there, Andria saw in no long space of time that somewhat was amiss, and she questioned him, asking wherein lay his trouble of mind, and what was the cause thereof. So Lope made answer to her questionings, and he told her all that had that day befallen, and of the enmity which Grazia bore towards him; and he said :

"Andria, know that it is because of the exceeding love thou bearest towards me, and because of the love which I equally do bear to thee, that Grazia has thus and in this manner taken occasion to offer me this offence. But despite all the scorn he has shown me, never shall he prevail to make me hold thy love less dear, which love of thine is dearer than life itself to me."

To Lope's words Andria made answer :

"And had it been in my power, Lope, and had I been able to hinder Grazia in this base deed, truly, as I have ever loved and shall ever love thee alone, and keep true to the faith I have given thee, I would have prevented him from coming to this shameful pass. Yet, as it was wholly out of my power to hinder, I can do nought but lament me that this evil has betided."

She spoke thus because Grazia was of great strength, exceeding the strength of other men, and also because he was most expert in the use and practice of all manner of weapons. While Lope, albeit he was likewise dexterous and skilful in the exercise of arms, was delicately moulded and very slight of limb, and his bodily frame was somewhat weak.

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Nevertheless, undaunted by Grazia's strength and hardiness, Lope put his trust in the uprightness and justice of his quarrel, and he was fully resolved to call upon Grazia to meet him betimes in the lists in single combat. For at the time it was the bad custom amongst knights to use this means for the revenge of private injuries.

And Lope told his wife of his purpose, and how he was determined to accomplish it.

Andria was a woman of courageous mind, and, according to ancient use, she was herself well versed in the exercise of many weapons. So, hearing his resolve, she answered him thus:

"Lope, to me it seems a very grievous thing that I who was full fain to be thy rejoicing and thy peace, should now be the cause of such trouble and toil, and that for my sake thou must enter the lists with thine enemy. For I know well the contest will prove a perilous contest, and in such combats chance rules the day rather than any valour or dexterity. Yet, since the ill customs amongst us allow of no other way whereby thou mayst defend thine honour and wipe away the disgrace with which Grazia, by his words, has most vilely shamed thee, I would not have thee do any otherwise than thou hast determined to do. For to act after any other guise would be unworthy of thee and unworthy of the love I bear thee, honour itself being the prize which every true knight must set first before him.

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And Grazia having said that thou didst lie, thine honour is blemished until thou hast avenged thee of the wrong. Yet, though thus it must be, my heart will never be at ease until I have seen the end to which this strife will be brought. Now, albeit I believe truly that God will be on our side to give us His aid—Grazia having without just cause or reason offered this offence—nevertheless I would not willingly leave aught undone that may be needful to further our victory. Therefore, if it appear good to thee that I in this matter should counsel thee, I judge that, the choice of weapons lying with thee, thou shouldst summon this man, who is both rash and hardy, to fight with the battle-axe and dagger. Moreover, if thou wilt follow my advice, bid him that he be clad in complete armour of steel, except only his feet, which shall be cased in chain armour. So I counsel thee, because he being stronger and hardier of body and limb than thou, thine endeavour must be to bring him to the ground if thou wouldst overcome him. And if so be that thou canst wound him in his feet, he must surely fall. And before the combat, I being, as thou knowest, from my childhood upwards trained to arms, and above all expert in wielding the battle-axe, thou and I will every day set ourselves to practise and exercise ourselves together until thou art so well assured in the use of thy weapon that thou mayst boldly meet Grazia in the field, and that without fear of defeat, notwithstanding that he is of great prowess and of valiant courage.”

Lope gave careful and diligent heed to the wise and loving counsel of his dear lady, and for many days' space, each harnessed in armour made after a like fashion, they secretly exercised themselves one with the other in the use of those weapons which Andria had chosen.

At that time it was the custom that three days before the day when the combat should be fought, the knight, with whom the choice of the weapons lay, should send the arms and armour with which he proposed to fight to his opponent, that he might view them. Therefore being now fully prepared for the encounter, Lope sent a messenger with a suit of mail and weapons to Grazia's house. These were right willingly accepted by him. It seemed indeed, in his eyes, that his antagonist could have chosen no weapon by which he could more easily be overcome. For Lope being so slight of limb, Grazia imagined within himself that even the very weight of such a weapon and of the heavy mail, must be burthensome to the delicate frame of the youth.

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Then it was agreed on either side—both being desirous that the issues of the battle might be swiftly determined—that the day appointed for the combat should be the first day of May, and that it should be fought in a field some two miles distant from the city of Salamanca. This field was a place set apart by the consent and authority of him who there held lordship, and it was duly prepared for such combats. There lists were set, and every man who so willed had leave to enter them. Now it happened that a homestead belonging to Grazia, and in which he was then dwelling, was scarcely more than a mile removed from this field, and Lope abode not very much farther from the same place.

It fell out that, all being thus ordered for the combat, the last day of April was come. And on the morrow, four hours before sunset, which was the time when, according to the common practice of the country, such combats were fought, the two foes were agreed to meet.

And it being the eve of the battle, Lope betook himself

to the city to bid some youths, who were his friends, accompany him next day to the lists, lest that Grazia should by some fraud or treachery assail him.

Forthwith, Lope being departed upon this errand, Andria secretly summoned a messenger. And bidding him say that he was sent by Lope, she despatched a message in Lope's name to Grazia. And the message ran thus. The quarrel between them being now about to come to an issue, it appeared well in Lope's eyes that they two should consent, without any idle forms or ceremonies, to enter the lists alone and without witnesses, and that either the death of the one or of the other should decide on whose side the victory rested, for that nothing save death should terminate the strife. Moreover—so the message said—the hour appointed being in the heat of the afternoon, they would do wisely not to await it, but to meet one with the other ready armed upon the field even at the first breaking of the day, and there straightway, and with no further word spoken between them, finish that which it was their purpose to accomplish.

To Grazia's impatience already it seemed that every hour he had to wait was a full year, and he replied that he was right well content to agree to the demand brought by her messenger. Each therefore being of one accord in the matter they exchanged an oath, as true and faithful knights, to repair, abiding by these conditions, alone and unattended at daybreak to the field.

Thus, in Lope's name, Andria dealt with Grazia. For she could not suffer it that Lope should take his life in his hands and hazard it combating for her sake. She desired far rather that, if fate so decreed, she should die herself and that Lope should live, than that Lope being slain she should remain alive.

Therefore, all being arranged according to her pleasure, before Lope had returned from the city, she arrayed herself in a suit of mail, and having armed herself, at the first hour of dawn she went forth alone to the field where the battle should be fought. There she entered within the lists where Grazia already awaited the coming of his adversary. Then, after that each of them had reposed a little while, without any word spoken between them, either set on the other and a fierce struggle began for the mastery.

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Deeming that Lope was his antagonist, Grazia so fought as though he desired at every stroke to strike his enemy dead. Yet surely had he known that it was Andria with whom he thus strove, he would have prayed that the steel in his hands might be shattered as glass before he should therewith wound her in any wise.

So they strove together for some space of time, and although Grazia was strong of arm and of limb, Andria was very swift of movement and keen of eye, and she was quick to turn her now to this side and now to that. And she defended herself, warding off his blows or dealing her own as occasion served. From the heavy strokes of his axe she slipped aside as best she might, and while thus she avoided them she watched continually for some opportunity when she might strike and cause him to fall. Nor was it very long before it chanced that she, being well practised in the blow, struck him upon his right foot. And so sharply did she wound him that for the pain of his hurt he could scarcely hold himself erect. Then, his wrath being equal to his suffering, he assaulted her a second time with yet more unwary violence, whereby, seizing the opportunity, she was enabled to deal another stroke upon his left foot. And with that second wound Grazia fell upon his knees, for he could

no longer stand. Then Andria, setting the point of her axe against his breast, would have thrust him to the ground. But he, being powerful, sought to rise, and in the struggle, as heaven—favouring the honourable enterprise of the girl—so willed it, unseen by him his dagger fell. Therefore she, seeing him deprived of the weapon with which he might yet, at close quarters, have wounded her, struck him with all her might, and standing over him, drew her own dagger, and strove to pierce his helmet with its point. Then Grazia would have laid his hand upon his dagger, but found it gone and knew he was come to a perilous pass, so, seizing the girl in his grasp, he tried to drag her down. She, finding she could not wound him, and feeling his strength so great that with it alone he might easily prevail, made a pretence to let fall the dagger from her hand, and when she had dropped the weapon, made semblance that she would throw herself down where it lay to recover it. This Grazia saw, and not knowing the girl's readiness of wit, unadvisedly loosed her from his hold and stretched his right hand towards the place where he had seen the dagger fall, with the intent to seize it and strike her with her own weapon. By so doing he gave Andria time to free herself from his grasp, and taking her axe, which lay near by, she stood upright, and with it she wounded him again and again, so that by no manner of means could he ward off her blows.

While matters were at this pass with the combatants, Lope, the hour being now late, came forth from the city accompanied by a goodly band of knights, and found how Grazia lay overthrown upon the field. Which when Lope saw he knew well in his mind that by none other than Andria this deed could have been done. And his gladness at seeing his adversary thus shamefully overcome, and his sorrow that

Andria had won the victory in his stead, were equal one with another in his heart.

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But Grazia, having seen how this new knight had come into the lists, and with so fair a company, turned him to Andria, crying :

“ Ah, traitor ! is this thy faith to thy promise ? Was it by aid of these thou soughtest my defeat ? ”

Andria, who was rejoiced that Lope and his company should be witnesses of her victory and should give testimony to the courage with which she had borne her in the fray, broke at length the silence she had kept all that morning and throughout the combat, saying :

“ Do not fear, Grazia, Lope shall indeed stand far off from thee, and by Andria and none other thou shalt be defeated.”

At the sound of her voice Grazia knew with whom it was he had fought, and so much was he ashamed to find that he had been thrown to earth by the hand of a woman, and that in the presence of all those knights who stood by, that his face burnt beneath his helmet of steel. But, addressing his speech to her, whose axe still rested against his breast, thus he spoke :

“ Wait yet awhile, lady mine, till I have said my say.”

Andria, who was both courteous and gentle, answered :

“ Say on, whatever it is in thy mind to utter.”

Then Grazia said :

“ Much truly I marvelled and held it for a great wonder that I should have been overthrown by the valour of thy husband. But since I see that it is thou thyself who camest to do battle with me, the marvel is verily at an end. Long time is it since thine eyes and the fairness of thy face did give me over wholly into thy hands, even as the hostage

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and prisoner of thy great beauty; and had I known that it was thou who wast armed against me, nought should I have adventured save to call on thee for mercy. For mercy and grace even now I entreat, for in that I have thus resisted thee I accuse myself of my guilt, nor save with my lifeblood can I atone for this my error. So in thy hands—which already held me bound and fettered—I lay my life. Do with it whatsoever thou wilt.”

Hearing him speak thus Andria smiled, and she replied :

“That which gave to me the victory was the justice of my cause. Justice was on my side, and by justice was my weapon guided. And the lawless love which thou didst bear towards me overcame thee not, but the uprightness of my quarrel has made thee my prisoner. Moreover, if thou wilt not surrender thee as a man overcome by arms, I will even now finish that I have begun.”

At these words many of the knights who were entered the lists in Lope’s company drew near, and sought to make peace between the girl and Grazia in this their dispute; while Lope prayed her that she would suffer Grazia to rise and go free, so that he might himself defend his own honour in the combat wherein she had supplanted him. Meanwhile, as they were debating the matter between them, the governor of the city, having heard some rumour of the combat, had sent messengers forthwith to the field, commanding that the battle should cease, and that they all, both of the one side and of the other, should without delay be brought before him. Thus constrained they returned to Salamanca; and Andria went on foot, but Grazia, by reason of his wounds, was borne by some of the knights, for so sorely was he hurt that he could not put one foot before the other.

And all the people of the city, the news having spread

abroad, came out to meet them, that they might all be-
hold the woman who had dared bear arms against so hardy
a knight.

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When they were come into the presence of the governor, he bade them set forth the cause of their quarrel. And when he heard that Grazia had dealt thus with Lope for Andria's sake, he judged that Grazia should make amends to Lope for his offence, and he forbade strictly that either the one or the other should carry this contention any further, under pain of his displeasure.

The matter being in this manner brought to an end, they all returned to their own houses. But henceforth the name of Andria was honoured, and the story of her valour told, not alone in Salamanca but throughout all the whole land.

VIII.

THE FAITH OF FILOTIMA.

Cintio, "Gli Ecatommiti," Decade V., Novel III.

Filotima, the wife of Calisto, loves, against her will, a Greek youth. She, being stricken with mortal sickness, elects to die rather than to fail in her faith to her husband.

NOT long ago there dwelt in Pera a youth of that place named Calisto. This youth had wedded a young Greek girl whose name was Filotima; and albeit the Greek race and Calisto's nation bear little love one to another by reason of their diversity of blood, and although their customs and manner of life do not agree, nevertheless Calisto and his wife were wholly of one mind and soul. They dwelt in such peace and serenity that between no man and woman in the whole world was it possible to imagine greater concord. And by the faith and the pure-hearted love each bore towards the other, and in which those two most gentle hearts were knit together, this peace was kept secure.

As they thus abode in all tranquillity, one day it happened that Filotima was bidden to a marriage feast. There, seated opposite to her at the banquet, was a Greek youth. He was of so winning and gracious an aspect, and so exceedingly and beyond all measure beautiful, that his face seemed as though it were in truth the face of some heavenly angel who had come down for a while to visit this earth below. And when the youth looked upon anyone they would find in his countenance such sweetness and power, that gazing upon him love would sweep vehemently into

the hearts of the beholders, and the shafts and torch of love would straightway pierce and scorch them.

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Thus it befell Filotima. For when she saw the youth she could not satisfy her eyes with gazing upon him, and love kindled his flame within her, and all her heart caught fire.

Then, being come again to her own house, all contrary to her will she felt that love burning within her, and her trouble became very great thereat, and she set herself diligently, and by every manner and means she could devise, to extinguish it.

So whenever it happened that the memory and image of the youth she had beheld came before her, she would turn her thoughts from him and direct them wholly towards her husband. And she would feign to herself that it was Calisto whose image was in her mind, and she would seek him and caress him a hundred times over with all the fond caresses of a new-made bride.

Thus steadfastly and faithfully she sought to solace herself in Calisto's love. Yet was all her striving vain, for the more she endeavoured to liberate herself from the bond of her alien love, the more she became enwrapped and entangled in its net. Nor was there anyone living to whom she dared entrust the story of her distress, nor any from whom she might solicit comfort or counsel in her grief. Therefore her sufferings were doubled, for it is ever the smothered fire that burns fiercest.

Then the sad-hearted Filotima bethought her that it would be well she should never again so much as look upon the face of the youth who had done her this grievous hurt; for—so it seemed to her—he being absent from her sight she might find some remedy for her malady. And

being resolved within herself upon this matter, she refused to go forth from her own dwelling, nor would she ever henceforth show herself at the door or at the windows of her house, lest her eyes should chance to light upon him.

Yet is it a hard thing to escape the hands of fate ; and it happened that all these her efforts were brought to nought. For her husband, being ignorant that she loved the Greek, chose out this very youth for his close companion and friend, and brought him to his house, and there would hold him continually in his company, and he would daily have him eat with them both at noon and in the evening. So fast, in truth, was the affection the two bore one to another, that they became even as though they were brothers of one blood.

Thereat Filotima was sorely afflicted, and she forbore their company and kept apart from them, showing to Calisto openly that the coming of the Greek was contrary to her pleasure. And truly and indeed it was unwelcome to her to meet him daily who was, against her will and despite all her striving, the cause of her mortal grief.

But Calisto thought that her displeasure arose out of envy for the love he bore his friend. And he said to her that she was much to be blamed, and, moreover, he told her that the youth was most worthy to be loved by one and all. Thus, with many protestations and persuasions, Calisto spoke to her of his excellence and of his goodness. Further, as Filotima had very exceeding delight in singing and making music on all kinds of instruments, her husband said :

“ Filotima, if only once thou wouldst consent to hear him sing and play to thee, thou wouldst see straightway that he in no ways merits the hatred thou bearest towards him.”

Now Filotima, whose one desire was to put the youth out

of her heart, hearing Calisto speak thus, suffered no little anguish. Yet, being resolved firmly that she would neither see nor hear him for any reason whatsoever, she replied that in these things she took no delight, but that the greatest pleasure Calisto could bestow upon her, would be if he would abstain from bringing the youth into her presence.

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To this Calisto answered :

"It is true, Filotima, that it is a common use amongst wives to hold those in enmity whom the husband loves best. But with thee it has never been after this fashion. For heretofore between thee and me there has ever been peace and concord and agreement. And I marvel much that at this present time thou hast set thyself on this wise to oppose my wish."

"If it has been as thou sayst heretofore," Filotima answered, "surely the peace of which thou speakest, wherein we have always dwelt, should now prevail with thee not to do me this displeasure."

To this Calisto made no further reply, but within himself he determined to do that which seemed best in his own judgment, howsoever much it was contrary to her desire.

Thus continuing in the companionship of the Greek, it happened one day, that as Filotima was playing and singing with Calisto, according to her wont, the youth chanced to enter the room where they were. Whereat Calisto was most glad, for he thought that if his dear lady could once be persuaded to hear the youth's singing, she would cease to vex herself over the friendship he bore him.

So Calisto turned to him with a joyous countenance and said :

"In a fortunate hour you are come hither, for now you will take part with us and play and sing."

And gaily Calisto gave a viol into his hands, and showed him the notes of the song they two were singing, and the three began to sing and to play together. And the youth sang his part with such gracious bearing, and with so clear a voice, that the very flints of the earth hearkening would have loved, even as the heart of Filotima loved him. And if before that poor heart was burnt with love's flames, now it was verily consumed.

Nevertheless, armed in her honour and faithfulness, she resisted every thought of untruth that did so fiercely assail her. And if by her inward struggle she could have overmastered her passion, and given the victory to constancy and faith, she would have had no need to exile the youth from her outward sight. But that passion, day by day, grew stronger, Calisto himself nourishing it with words and deeds, until at length Filotima determined to try some other means, and by awakening suspicion within her husband's mind cause him to mistrust the youth, that thus misdoubting him he might no longer bring him into her company.

So one day she spoke on this manner :

"Calisto, I know not verily how it can seem to thee befitting that thou shouldst entertain thy friend so freely in thy house, and suffer him to frequent my company even as if he were my brother. Thou knowest that for a much less cause, those who in the world discourse on such matters and who are ever more ready to think evil than good, seeing what thou dost should think amiss and speak ill thereof. And I not only do desire to be faithful to thee in deed—as in truth I am—but also to be held far removed from any suspicion or idle report by which dishonour may be ascribed

unto me. And thou, likewise, shouldst make it thy study that I, who am thine, should be held in reverence and honour of all men." The
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To these words Calisto made answer that he knew well she was both good and true, and that also he knew the youth was of loyal and honourable life; and that he held himself secure from any fear of shame. That, as concerning the report of slanderous tongues, men spake no ill of women whose lives, as hers, were wholly innocent of wrong.

"Nay," she answered, "that were to make of me a saint. And even so men would speak evil of me, even as they do of others who are guiltless and true. Therefore I tell thee, Calisto, that when our close friendship with this youth is rumoured abroad, I misdoubt me some voice will be lifted against me by reason of this continual companionship. And what I have said I was fully minded to say, so that thou mayst take more heed in thy dealings, and guard my honour from ill words, which from ill deeds I guard."

At these words of hers Calisto laughed, and lightly set them aside. For he thought Filotima's ill-will to the Greek was the occasion of her speaking thus, and, as before, he continually entertained the youth in her company.

Thus a thousand ways were daily open to Filotima, whereby she might, if she had willed it, yield to the passion which day by day was wasting away her very life; nor, indeed, had she so willed to yield, need her secret have been known to any save to herself and the youth. Yet did she ever fly any such occasion. For even had such dishonour been known to her alone, and albeit no other living man might know her sin, it would have seemed to her a shame and infamy for ever.

Seeing that she had in no manner prevailed to kindle

any jealous fears in the mind of her husband, she strove to feign anger with the Greek himself, and by unkindly looks and words to make manifest that his coming displeased her. But this, too, was in vain, for love made gentle the sharpness of her speech, nor could she counterfeit the anger she would have him read upon her face; and no thought of her displeasure harboured itself in the youth's heart.

So Filotima's strife endured. Her faith for ever at variance with her passion, and truth contending with the craving of her heart. And so fierce was the combat, that it came to pass her bodily strength failed her by reason of its great fierceness, and a mortal sickness came upon her. Calisto, seeing the girl thus stricken, and his love for her being very great, was overwhelmed with a sorrow as great as his love. And he summoned the physicians, and he sought for every possible remedy whereby she might be cured of her malady. But neither did the physicians nor yet their remedies avail anything. For the fire within her was burning her very life away.

Finding her thus consumed, the physicians said her disease was born of inward sadness, and they bade Calisto strive to dissipate her melancholy that she might be thereby healed.

When Calisto heard this he spared nor songs nor music nor games nor pastimes of any sort wherewith his Filotima might be gladdened. And to this end he and the Greek youth would sing many songs for her, and sometimes, while Calisto played, the youth would dance to please her with some damosel who had come thither to offer her comfort. And thus, seeking a salve for her hurt, Calisto forwarded her dying and drew death apace to her side; and hour by hour her malady grew upon her.

Then, at length, Calisto, thinking within himself of divers things, bethought him of the truth. And it came into his mind that Filotima had loved the youth, and that for this and no other reason she had set herself to bring him into disfavour, and had endeavoured to banish from her sight the face by whose beauty she had been wounded even to death, and how, keeping her faith, she had done battle with her heart's desire. So, having now full understanding and knowledge of the whole matter, it seemed best to Calisto that he should preserve his wife from death by any manner of means rather than that she, dying for love of the Greek, should perish.

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Thereupon one day he entered into discourse with her, speaking of many and divers things, until presently, and as it were by chance, he began to talk of the youth. And he said how dear he must indeed be to all women of gentle heart; moreover, he said, none could be held blameworthy for loving so dear a youth, and that he himself, had he been born a woman, must surely have given him his heart. To these words he added others, intending thereby that Filotima should let fall some token by which her love might be plainly discovered.

But Filotima, taking good heed to her speech, answered him :

“ It might well be possible, Calisto, that some unwedded girl should bestow her heart upon this youth, for love comes where and when it will, nor can any hinder its coming, nor can pure thoughts and innocent suffice for a shield whereby a woman may be defended against the flames love kindles to consume the soul. But were she a wedded wife, and if she held her husband's honour in that high esteem which befits women who are loyal and honourable (nor do I

count them worthy to name who deal otherwise), she would count it a lighter thing to die than living to stain her fair and clean soul. And thus dying she would show forth by a most clear sign that Love, who was so strong to inflame her heart, was yet so weak that he could in no wise overthrow her honest faith and the constancy of her high honour. This would I myself elect to do if my ill fate had wakened in me the love of this fair youth on whose beauty thou hast set such a rare value."

Then Calisto said :

" And so dear thou art to me, Filotima, that if the thought had come into thy mind, and that thou didst choose death rather than to comfort thee in the youth's love (had it so chanced his beauty had won thy love) I should sorrow that I had ever been born."

" And if by the desire of folly I had ever stained my honour and spotted my faith towards thee," she answered, " I should sorrow that I was yet alive. For living in such infamy I should hold myself as indeed dead, while, did I die true to thee, I should account of myself as eternally living."

After she had spoken thus Calisto resolved to make one last and ultimate effort for the preserving of her life; and he said :

" I will speak openly with thee, Filotima. I know that thou dost love this youth, and that this love of thine has brought thee near to thine end. And thou diest because, and for this cause only, thou wilt not break thy faith to me or surrender thine innocence of life to assuage thy passion. Of this, alas! I have clear proof, for I behold how thou art brought low before my very eyes. For many a day I have known the secret of thy malady; but since it is all in vain

that I have afforded thee occasion to find solace for thy love, and that thou hast refused thus to remedy thine ill, one thing only remains for thee to do. As thou hast given me evidence of thy faith, so now give unto me the evidence of the love which I believe thou hast ever borne towards me. No greater token of this canst thou give than to seek to live. And knowing well that without the desire of thy heart thou canst no longer live, I myself do pray thee yield to it. Rather, on any wise, would I have thee living than dead. So take comfort and hope, and winning thereby a little strength, be content to take that which shall restore thee to life. If I am pitiful to thee, Filotima, I entreat thee be not pitiless to thyself. Yet if pity for thyself moves thee not, nevertheless be merciful to Calisto, who is thine. For in thine obstinate resolve thou slayest him. Know, such is the love I have for thee, that if thou givest thyself over unto death, straightway I will follow thee, and with one blow thou shalt slay us both, and the children who are thine and mine shall be left without thee or me, and they, being but little, may fare full evilly, as thou, who art loving and wise, dost know."

The
Faith of
Filotima.

Having thus spoken weeping, he was silent.

Then Filotima, the end being near at hand, answered him :

"Calisto, being thine, my thoughts were never turned to any other than thee. But as concerning the youth of whom thou speakest, at this last hour of my life I will not deny thee knowledge of the truth. For the flame of love not only has touched, but has consumed my heart, and I have learnt that from its power there is no redemption. Would that then, when I told thee it was not fitting he should frequent our company, thou hadst known what now thou

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hast learnt; for then, hadst thou forbidden his continual coming, perchance the fire of my love, seeing him not, would have spent itself. But since, by reason of my contrary destiny, what has been has been, I will die, Calisto, thy Filotima and faithful, as thine and faithful I have lived. Nor will I take at thy hands the remedy thou offerest; thee I refuse as heretofore I of myself did refuse to take it, when thou didst make the way so easy and secure. And albeit that thy first courtesy, and this thy last kindness, manifest the love in which all our life-days we twain have dwelt (and which love I ever held mine), notwithstanding I may not prove my love nor pity towards thee by living as thou wouldst have me live. Nor can I do that thing for which doing I should evermore hold myself in hatred, nor live wronging the faith and honour I have kept inviolate. Rather I would leave thee the pledge of my true love, dying and showing myself worthy of thy name, which is mine, than by thy sufferance staining it with dishonour, show myself to thee and my children disloyal. But live thou, Calisto, my beloved, and love thy Filotima, and hold her, dead, dear in thy memory, as she in the life eternal will hold thee dear, if so be that in that life our loves, with which we here do love, abide with us."

Then being able to speak no longer the girl was silent; and after a few days she died.

And Calisto grieved for her out of all measure, nor while he lived did he find any solace save in the remembrance of the faith and truth of Filotima his well-beloved.

IX.

THE LOVE-RING.

Sebastiano Erizzo, "Sei Giornati," Day I., Novel II.

Charles the Great loves a woman of base condition. She being dead, he will not forsake her. The cause of his madness is made known to a bishop, who, removing a ring from the dead woman's mouth, releases the king from his frenzy. But the ring, being cast into the waters of a marsh, the king refuses to depart from the swamp, but dies and is buried there.

IN a province of the kingdom of France, at that time when Charles, for his many excellent and illustrious deeds surnamed the Great, was king, there lived a woman. She had neither wealth nor any beauty; she was of ignoble birth and base condition. Yet it so chanced that the king seeing her loved her with an immeasurably great love. To him it seemed that she surpassed all other women of his realm; she was very fair and gracious in his eyes. Moreover, the love he bore her was so great that, as it were, his very life was lost in it, and seeking her caresses his soul became corrupt.

For her sake he held as nothing the wounds with which his renown and honour were thereby pierced. He abandoned the government of his kingdom, he relinquished all other thoughts, nor did he call any other matter to his remembrance. He forgot all else, even himself, that he might seek her pleasure alone. He found no rest, nor did any good content him, save the joy of her presence.

Therefore in his realm he won great infamy, and to his friends and kindred he was a scorn and a grief. Nor could

The Love- any man hope to find a remedy for this malady of madness
Ring. which had befallen the king, for to all salutary counsel his
ears were shut.

But in time it happened, by an unlooked-for chance, that the woman who had caused this great evil died. Then those who were about the king's person, and all his subjects likewise throughout the whole realm, greatly, but secretly, made rejoicing.

Nevertheless their rejoicing came speedily to an end, and the grief which befell them was more than the grief they had had before. For by her death the spirit of the king was contaminated by a yet more hideous infirmity. Death availed nothing, nor was his frenzy mitigated; rather, beside the cold and lifeless body of the dead girl his love grew into an overmastering madness, and with strange and marvellous power it manifested itself to all his people.

Having commanded that the body of the dead woman should be embalmed, he clothed her in purple raiment and adorned her with costly and precious gems, and day and night he remained, the bond-servant of his love, wrapped in deep thought, watching by her side. By which it was made plainly evident to all that the discord between life and death was impotent to sever the living king from the woman who was dead, and that he, from a just and glorious lordship, had fallen to an unjust and ignominious servitude.

Thus the king abode, with shut doors, denying access to those who sought him. Many a time and often he called upon his love by name, even as though she were still living, until wellnigh it seemed as if she must indeed answer him. He made known to her his torments and all his thoughts; to her he sighed and wept, and bitter and continual were

his tears. Such refuge and solace he sought for his sorrow, for such things are the companions of love. The Love-Ring.

Ever mourning, he lamented over her, and said :

“ Alas, O Death ! who art savage and fierce, the destiny of all living things, how hast thou impoverished the world of a thing so very fair and precious ? Was it haply that thou soughtest to enrich heaven, or that thou wouldst make of her a new star ? Me thou hast condemned to eternal wretchedness. Oh thou, my only stay in this weary life, thou hast finished thy course, for death, all too hurried, has overtaken thee. Would that in the same hour I too had reached the term of my life-days, for in so far as they exceed thine I dwell in pain no death excels. O Death ! thou art the grief of the glad, the desire of the joyless, for thou comest unlooked for to the happy, and thou fliest those who crave for thy coming. How gaily should I welcome thy approach to liberate my soul from this prison of earth ! O kingship ! O sceptre ! O crown ! how great is your impotence, what succour in you shall the heart find for its agony ? Mine 'are fair palaces, infinite treasures, wide lands, the obedience of multitudinous subjects. With fire, with water, with rapine, with every mishap and mutation of changeful fortune, expend, O Death ! thine anger upon these ; yet leave me her only, who to me alone is dear. But her thou takest, and these thou hast spared.

“ In God I greet thee, O greatly beloved, my lady ! First may the dusk night bring brightness to the dark, may water accord with flame, death sign an armistice with life, the sea make treaty with the wind, before the long love my heart keeps in sure custody shall ever pass away. By death's outrage thine eyes are hidden from me, but let death do what death wills to do, thine image is stamped upon my

The Love- heart. Thou in thine acts wert royal, in thy semblance
Ring. meek. Thou wert the hostel of all grace, and Love with thee
made sojourn. When thou didst die the earth was bereft of
its sun, and on mine eyes fell darkness, having none other
light than thee. O Love! how strong is thy lordship!
Thou, the grief that rejoices, the fear which is brave, the
pleasure that wounds, the remedy that slays us to life, what
more wouldst thou with me? Give me, I pray thee, help.
Having bereft me of my heart's desire, cease to pierce me
with thy beams. Grant me thy peace. Let death and time
be medicine to my ill!"

And the words of the king were as words cast upon the
wind, and lost themselves in the ears of the dead. So love
wrought with him strange and incredible marvels.

Now at this time there was found in the king's court a
wise and holy bishop—he was chief amongst the councillors
of the land—who, moved with compassion at the misery of
the king, and finding that human aid availed nothing,
turned himself, as a good and devout shepherd, to seek the
suffrage of God. Placing in God all his hope, he besought
Him with pious and humble prayers to put an end to this
great evil. Nor did the good bishop intermit this good work
of his until, by the grace of God, his prayers were heard and a
marvellous miracle was vouchsafed him. For it fell out that
as, bathing his breast with many tears, he celebrated the
divine office, a voice from heaven bade him open the lips of
the dead woman, which doing he would find the cause of
the king's madness. Whereat the bishop was suddenly
made very glad, and he finished the divine office, and went
swiftly to the palace, nor dared any man withstand his
entrance to the royal chambers. Seeking the place where
the dead girl lay, he entered, and secretly opening her

mouth, he there found hidden a little ring, and in the ring was set a precious jewel. And he took from her the ring. The Love-Ring.

In a short space of time the king came back to the palace, and, as was his wont, he forthwith came to the room where the dead woman was. But when he saw her, terror seized him, nor did he dare so much as to touch her, she being dead. And he commanded that she should be borne thence and buried. Thus from that long madness the king was released.

Then the bishop, who was a righteous man and wise, fearing lest the ring, falling into the hands of some other, should bring peril to the king, cast it into the depths of a lake, the which lake stood midmost of a marshy plain, not very far removed from the city.

One day it happened that the king drew near to that place, and beholding the waters of that lake he took exceeding delight in them, and the breath of the marsh land was fragrant to him, and above all other things it was good and pleasant to him, nor ever would he henceforth depart from it. And in the midst of that marsh he built a fair and royal palace, and also a temple. Nor could any power, whether it were the power of God or the power of man, prevail to make him depart from that place. There he died, and there also he was buried.

X.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE SERPENT.

Straparola, "Piacevoli Notti," Night IV., Favola II.

Erminione Glaucio, an Athenian, takes to wife Filena Centurione. He becomes jealous of her, and accuses her before the judge. By means of Hippolito, her lover, she is acquitted, and Erminione is condemned.

IN Athens, the ancient city of Greece, in past ages the home and storehouse of all learning, but now totally destroyed and ruined by reason of her great pride, there dwelt a man of gentle birth, by name Messer Erminione Glaucio, and he was held by the city in honour. He was a man of great wealth, but of little wit.

Being old in years and childless, he determined to marry. For his wife he took a young girl named Filena, the daughter of Messer Cesarino Centurione. She was of noble blood, of marvellous loveliness and of infinite virtue, nor was there any other in the city who was her equal. On account of this her exceeding beauty, Messer Erminione feared that many lovers would seek her favour, and that falling into some shameful fault she should thereafter be upheld to scorn. So he resolved to seclude her in a high tower of his palace, and to suffer no man to see her.

It was not long before the old man—though reason he knew none—became possessed by so great a jealousy that he would scarcely trust even himself.

Now it happened that in the city there dwelt a certain Cretan scholar, called Hippolito. Albeit he was young, he

was prudent and wary; moreover, all men loved and honoured him greatly, for he was both gentle and winning. Before Filena had wedded, he had loved her for full many a day. Likewise he had then dwelt in close companionship with Messer Erminione, who bore Hippolito no less affection than he would have borne to his own son.

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Hippolito, having been somewhat overwearied with much study, and wishing to re-invigorate his mind, had departed from Athens and passed over to Candia, where for a while he had tarried. When he returned to Athens he found that Filena had become the wife of Erminione. Thereat he grieved beyond all measure, and he grieved yet more when he found himself unable so much as to see her at his pleasure. Moreover, he could not suffer it that she, who was very young and of such excelling beauty, should be bound to an old and worn-out man.

So, being unable longer to endure the sharp stings and burning shafts of love, Hippolito set himself to discover if there were not some secret way to be found whereby he could attain the desire of his heart. And as many ways lay open to him, with the utmost wariness he elected that which promised most to avail him.

Near where he dwelt there was the workshop of a worker in wood. Thither Hippolito betook himself, and commanded that two chests should be made for him. Each was to be of the same size, long, wide and high, and each was to be of the very same quality, so that it should not be easy to distinguish the one from the other.

After this he sought Messer Erminione, and feigning with much craft to be in need of his help, he said to him:

“Messer Erminione, my friend, for whom I bear a son’s

affection and reverence, but for the kindness I have always received at your hands I should not have adventured with such boldness to require a service from you. Nor do I doubt that I shall obtain the favour I crave. It has come to pass that, for some negotiations of importance, I must go to Frenna, where I must remain until these matters are accomplished. Now, I have no man I can trust to overlook my household, nor can I rely greatly upon my serving-men. Therefore I wish, if you agree thereto, to place a chest, full of my most precious possessions, in your care."

Messer Erminione, suspecting nothing of the wile of the scholar, answered that he was well content that this should be done. And moreover, for greater security, he promised to place the chest in his sleeping chamber.

For which the scholar rendered him the best thanks he was able, assuring him that he would keep this favour in perpetual remembrance. And he begged of him that he would go with him to his house, that there he might show him what he had laid by in the chest.

So Messer Erminione, being come to the place where Hippolito dwelt, he showed him a chest filled with various robes, jewels and chains, and these of no small value. Then Hippolito called one of his serving-men, and, pointing him out to Messer Erminione, said :

"Messer Erminione, whensoever this my servant comes to reclaim the chest, will you accord to him the same confidence that you would were it I myself in person ?"

Messer Erminione being gone, Hippolito presently placed himself in the other chest, which was similar to the one wherein the raiment and jewels were laid, and shutting himself in, desired the servant to convey it to the place he had commanded. The man, to whom Hippolito had made known

the whole matter, in obedience to his master summoned a porter, and putting the chest upon his shoulders had it carried to the room in the tower where Messer Erminione was accustomed to sleep with his wife. The
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Now Messer Erminione, being a man of much wealth and influence, was one of the chief citizens of the city. And it happened that, because of the authority he held, he was obliged, against his will, to go for some days to a place called Porto Pireo—some three hundred miles distant from Athens—there to arbitrate between the citizens of that country amongst whom certain feuds and contentions had arisen. And very ill-content, because of the jealousy which day and night pursued him, Messer Erminione took his departure.

Meantime the youth, from the closed chest where he lay hidden, had many a time heard the girl bemoan herself, weeping and lamenting, and cursing her hard destiny and the hour when she had been made to become the wife of him to whom the ruin of her life was due.

Now when she should have fallen asleep, he awaited a fitting moment to discover himself. Then, when she appeared to him to be in her first slumber, he came forth, and drawing near her said :

“Waken, O my soul ! for I am thine Hippolito.”

She, thus awakened, knowing and seeing him, for he had kindled a light, would have cried aloud. But the youth, putting his hand upon her mouth, would not suffer her to make any outcry, but said to her, weeping :

“Be still, O my heart ! Dost thou not see I am thine own true love, to whom life itself without thee is bitter ?”

Hearing, the girl was somewhat appeased, and seeing that Hippolito was young and fair, and that Erminione was

aged, she was not wholly angered. And thus, they two being together, they cast about in their minds how either might again see the other.

When the morning was come the youth once more hid himself in the chest. And there by day he lay concealed and by night he came forth. And many days and many nights went by, until at length Messer Erminione, having pacified the dissensions of the country to which he had been sent, his mind being sorely troubled with the pangs of the furious jealousy which continually tormented him, returned to his own home.

The serving-man of Hippolito heard of Messer Erminione's return, and did not delay long before he went in search of him, and in Hippolito's name reclaimed the coffer. This, according to the agreement, was readily delivered to him, and he, calling a porter, had it carried back to Hippolito's house.

But it fell out that, after some little time had passed, Messer Erminione conceived a suspicion that in his absence Filena had betrayed him, and that some lover had found his way into the tower where she was secluded, and his suspicion growing upon him, had it not been for fear of forfeiting his own life, he would willingly himself have slain her privately. Nevertheless he held his hand, wishing rather to compass her death by public justice than to stain himself with her blood. Therefore, transported with fury and rage, he betook himself to the palace of the Podesta, and there he accused his wife of unfaithfulness. Then the Podesta, who could not condemn her without due observance of the laws, sent for her to come into his presence, and diligently examined her on this matter.

Now in Athens there was a statute held in great honour.

This statute ordained that, should any woman be accused of unfaith by her husband, she should forthwith be led to the foot of a brazen pillar in the city. On this pillar was a serpent. There it was decreed that the woman should take an oath and say if verily and indeed she had committed the crime of which she stood accused. Having thus taken the oath, she was commanded to put her hand into the mouth of the serpent. If the woman had sworn falsely the teeth of the serpent severed her hand from her arm, but if she had sworn truly she remained unhurt.

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Hippolito, having learnt that Filena had been summoned before the Podesta, foresaw that the quarrel would be brought to trial by this judgment, and that, if he would not have her caught in the snares of a shameful death, it was incumbent upon him to come to her succour.

Aided by his own subtilty and by his desire to save her from her doom, he swiftly devised a means. Divesting himself of his dress, he covered himself with the rags of a madman, and by stealth, unseen by any man, he left his own house. Then he set out, running as a madman runs, performing the frenzied antics of a fool as he went towards the palace of the Podesta.

When the guards of the palace had brought the girl before the Podesta, all who were in the city, hearing, had thronged forth to see how the judgment would be given. The madman thrust himself now here, now there, amongst the crowd. Forcing his way to the front, he reached the place where Filena stood, and throwing his arms suddenly round the unhappy girl he kissed her. Nor could she, her arms being bound behind her, defend herself.

Being come to the place of trial, the Podesta said to Filena :

" Filena, as thou seest, here stands Messer Erminione, thy husband, who accuses thee of unfaith. He demands that I, according to the law, should condemn thee to due punishment. Now, therefore, swear this oath and say if thou art guilty of the sin with which thy husband has charged thee."

The girl was ready of wit and keen. She swore the oath, saying vehemently that no man had ever so much as laid a hand upon her, save only her husband and that same madman who but now had kissed her. When she had thus sworn, the soldiers led her to the foot of the serpent, and she, having laid her hand in his mouth, drew it forth unhurt. For she had sworn the very truth.

So the crowd, and the parents and kindred of the girl, who had come to witness the trial, adjudged her to be most innocent. And they cried aloud that Messer Erminione merited that death which Filena would have suffered. But because he was of noble blood, and had a great following of kinsfolk, and being likewise one of the chief men of the city, the Podesta was not willing that he should be publicly burnt, as the justice of the statutes allowed. Yet, that he might not be lacking in the discharge of his office, the Podesta condemned him to be cast into prison, where in some brief space of time he died.

This was the miserable end of the jealousy of Messer Erminione; and from her shameful death Filena was delivered. And when some few days were passed, Hippolito wedded Filena for his lawful wife, and they lived in joy for many years.

XI.

THE DROWNING OF MALGHERITA.

Straparola, "Piacevoli Notti," Night VI., Favola II.

Malgherita Spoletina loves Teodoro the Anchorite. She swims to him by night, and is discovered by her brothers. They lead her astray with a false light, and she is miserably drowned.

RAGUSA, a fair city in Dalmatia, is built upon the sea. Not very far from it lies an island, commonly called Mid Island, where there stands a strong and impregnable fortress. Between Ragusa and this island there is a narrow rocky shelf, with nothing built upon it except a very small chapel and a little hut, half roofed in. Because the ground was sterile and the air poisonous, no man abode there save a certain anchorite named Teodoro, who for the expiation of his sins had vowed himself to the service of that chapel. Having no other means of sustenance, from time to time he was accustomed to go to Ragusa, and sometimes to Mid Island, to beg for alms.

One day it happened that Teodoro was on the island, and as, according to his wont, he was begging his bread, he found there that which he had never thought of seeking, for it fell out that on the road he passed a girl; she was very beautiful and she was joyous of face. They called her Malgherita. She, looking on him, saw that he was fair of countenance and of winning aspect, and within herself she thought that he was fashioned far rather for human joy than for his solitary life. And in her heart, with vehemence, Malgherita kissed him. That day and night she thought of nought save of him.

The anchorite, who knew nothing of this at this time, continued his quest for alms, and often he came to the house where Malgherita dwelt, and asked bread of her. Malgherita, whose love flamed at her heart, gave alms to him, but her love she did not dare to make manifest.

Yet Love, who protects all those who willingly are subject unto his laws, nor ever fails to guide them to the road by which they may attain the summit of their hearts' desire, gave to Malgherita such courage that she at length spoke thus :

"Teodoro, my brother and the only refreshment of my soul, so great is the passion which tortures me, that if you come not to my succour you will verily see me bereft of life itself. The love I bear to thee consumes me, nor can I any longer strive with love's fire. If so be that you would not see yourself the cause of my dying, come quickly to mine aid."

And when she had said these words, most bitterly she wept.

The anchorite, who until then had not seen that she loved him, remained as one whose reason has forsaken him. But at last, having somewhat come to himself, he began to speak with her, and of such avail was their speech, that setting on one side the things appertaining to heaven, they sought those things only that belonged to love. Nor did any other thought find place in their joy save the thought of how they might meet and appease the longing of their hearts.

Then the girl, who was ready and keen-witted, said :

"Dear heart of mine, set fear aside, doubt not but that I will discover to you in what manner we must act. And thus it must be. To-night, at the fourth hour of the night, you, for a beacon, must place a lighted lamp in the window of your cell, and forthwith seeing it I will come to you."

But Teodoro answered :

"Alas, my child ! how can this be ? for between us lies the sea. Thou knowest that neither thou nor I have any boat which can carry thee across the water, and to trust thyself in the hands of others would be greatly to imperil honour and life both for thee and for me."

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The girl replied :

"Have no fear ; leave this matter to me. I will find a way whereby I may come to you without danger of death or dishonour. For when I see the light shine out I will swim over the sea to you, nor shall any man know aught concerning thee or me."

To her Teodoro made answer :

"Very great indeed is the peril lest thou shouldst sink in the water. Thou art little more than a child, and thy breath is but weak, and the way is long from shore to shore. Well might it happen that thou shouldst become exhausted and be drowned."

"That my breath should fail me I have no fear," said the girl ; "for I could well swim for mastery with a fish."

Seeing that she was firmly resolved in her own mind, the anchorite was perforce content that so it should be. And when the dusk of the night had come he kindled a light, as between them was agreed, and he set it in the window. Also he made ready a very fair white linen cloth. Then he awaited with great gladness the coming of the girl for whose presence he longed.

She saw his light and was joyful. Taking off her upper dress, barefooted, in her shift alone, she went down to the seashore and entered the water ; and with swift hands and feet she swam so fast that in less than the fourth part of an hour she had reached the rock where the anchorite watched, awaiting her.

And he saw her, and he took her by the hand and he guided her to his ill-roofed cottage, and gave to her the linen cloth, which was white as any snow, that therewith she might dry her limbs heedfully. And he led her to his narrow cell, and for the space of two long hours, with gentlest words and many close caresses, the two lovers remained in exceeding felicity one with another. Then the girl, repaid full well by his love, having made agreement after what manner she should return to him, departed, content of heart.

Henceforth, Malgherita, to whom his love was very dear, each time that she saw the light which he had kindled relit, swam back to him.

Yet contrarious and blind Fortune, the mover and orderer of the things of this world, and the adversary of the happy, did not long suffer that she should rejoice in the love she held so sweet, but as envious of the good of men, Fate thrust itself between and shattered all her hope.

For one night, although the air was dense with noisome mists, the girl saw the light, and seeing, she threw herself into the sea. But as she swam she was discerned by certain fishermen who were casting their nets a little way off. They, imagining within themselves that what they descried was some fish, set themselves to watch. Then they knew that it was a woman, and they saw her go up towards the cottage where the anchorite dwelt. At this they wondered greatly, and taking their oars in their hands they rowed to within a little distance of the rock, and they waited there until the girl once more came out of the cottage and swam back to Mid Island.

Nor had the poor girl so well concealed herself but that the fishermen recognized her.

The men having thus discovered the girl, and knowing

who she was, many times saw her swim over that perilous passage. And having learnt the secret of the lighted lamp, they deliberated often amongst themselves and resolved that they would keep the matter hidden. But when they had considered the disgrace which might befall her kindred, and also the peril of death to which the girl was herself exposed, they changed their determination and decided to disclose all that they knew. Therefore they went to the house where the brothers of Malgherita dwelt, and from point to point they told them the whole story.

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When the brothers had heard and understood the unhappy tidings, they would believe nothing of it until with their own eyes they had seen that it was even so. Then, being persuaded of the truth, they determined that Malgherita should surely die, and having taken counsel together to this end, they set themselves to accomplish their purpose.

In the dusk of the evening the younger of them went down to the seashore and entered his fishing-boat, and quietly and alone he crossed over to the rock and begged the anchorite to give him safe harbourage for the night. He had done a deed, he told him, for which cause he stood in great fear that he would be taken and put to death by the law.

The hermit knew him to be the brother of Malgherita, and he received him with much kindness, and made him very welcome. And all that night they remained together talking one with another of various things, and Teodoro discoursed with him of all the miseries of this present life, and of those mortal sins that slay the soul of man and render him a bonds slave to Satan.

While the younger brother thus abode with the anchorite, the others secretly went forth from their house. They

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carried with them a little pole and also a light, and taking their boat they steered towards the cottage of Teodoro. Having reached the rock, they erected the staff they had brought with them, and to it they attached the light they had kindled, and awaited what should ensue.

Malgherita saw the light, and after her custom she came down to the sea and swam swiftly towards the rock. The brothers, whose boat lay there, hearing the movement in the water, took up their oars, and very silently they pushed off from the rock. Nor were they heard by her, nor seen because of the obscure darkness of the night. And very, very softly, without any sound, they floated noiselessly away.

The girl, by reason of the darkness, could see nought else save the false light, and this she followed, while the brothers, departing from the shore, steered out far into the open sea. And Malgherita still followed. Then they threw down the staff, and they put out the light.

The miserable girl, seeing the light gone, nor knowing where she was, already weary with the length of the way, and finding herself beyond reach of any human help, abandoned all effort, and, drifting like a wrecked vessel, she was sucked under by the sea.

Her brothers, who saw that she could find no means of escape, left her in the midst of the open sea, and returned to their own home.

When the clear dawn of the day was come, the younger brother made due thanks to the anchorite for the kindness he had shown to him, and departed.

Now throughout the hamlet of the island the sad tidings were already spread that Malgherita Spoletina was not to be found. For this the brothers feigned exceeding sorrow, but in their hearts they rejoiced.

The third day had not gone by before the sea washed up the dead body of the luckless girl upon the shore of the anchorite's rock. And seeing and knowing her for Malgherita, it would have needed but little to make him take his own life also.

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gherita.

But lifting her, unseen by any, he drew her from the water; and he carried her into his own cell, and casting himself down upon the dead body, for a long while he wept. He covered her white breast with plentiful tears, and many and many a time in vain he called upon her name. And when he had mourned a long while, he resolved to give her burial, and with fastings, and prayers, and other good deeds, to bring succour to her soul.

And he took the spade with which he always tended his garden ground, and he made a grave in the little chapel, and with many tears he shut her eyes and closed her lips; and he made her a garland of roses and of violets, and placed it upon her head. Then he blessed her and he kissed her, and laid her down in the grave and covered her with earth.

In such wise was the honour of Malgherita and of her brothers kept untarnished. Nor of her fate did any man hereafter know.

XII.

THE REFUSAL OF FENICIA.

Bandello, Part I., Novel XXII.

How Signor Timbreo di Cardona, being with the King of Aragon in Messina, loved Fenicia Lionata, and the various mishaps that befell before he made her his wife.

SOME years ago, when Piero of Aragon held his court in Messina, there was a baron, Signor Timbreo di Cardona by name, whom all men honoured greatly. Moreover, the king, because he was very valiant and had acquitted himself gallantly in the past war, held him in singular affection. Above all other things this baron loved a young girl, the daughter of Messer Lionato di Lionati, a gentleman of Messina, and little by little it came to pass that his love so increased that without the dear sight of her face he did not care to live. She was of gentle blood, and fairer and more winning than any other in that country. Her name was Fenicia.

The baron, having from his boyhood upward served the king both by sea and by land, held very rich rewards. Besides other gifts the king had bestowed upon him the lordship of Collisano with other domains, so that his wealth, over and above the pension granted to him by the king, was more than twelve thousand ducats.

Every day Signor Timbreo passed before the house where the girl dwelt, esteeming himself blessed when he saw her face; and Fenicia, who, although young, was keen-

eyed and ready of wit, easily divined the reason of his coming.

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Now it was commonly rumoured that Signor Timbreo stood in high favour with the king, and that few of the courtiers possessed more power than he. Therefore all men did him homage. Over and above what Fenicia heard, she saw him clad in very fair array and accompanied by a noble retinue, and seeing also that he was a youth of great beauty and of gentle bearing, she began to take pleasure in watching him, and gave him befitting salutation.

Each day the love the cavaliere bore her increased; the oftener he beheld her, so much the more the fire within his heart consumed him. And his passion thus growing apace—so that for her sake he was ready to adventure all he had—he resolved by any means possible to win her love.

Yet he strove in vain. However many were the letters, messages, and messengers he sent to her, her reply was always the same: “That to him alone to whom she should be espoused she would belong.” With which answer the poor lover was ill-content, and the more that he could not prevail with her to keep either gifts or letters.

Being nevertheless determined, and understanding that whoever wished to obtain her love must make her his wedded wife, the cavaliere, after having thought much upon the matter, resolved to ask her in marriage of her father. And although in so doing he deemed that he abased himself, nevertheless, she being of an ancient and noble race, he was minded to make no further delay, so great was the love he bore to her.

Having taken this counsel with himself, he sought a gentleman of Messina with whom he held close companionship. To him he told his desire and the service he required

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he should render him by Messer Lionato. And this service his friend accomplished according to the commission of the cavaliere.

Messer Lionato, informed by him of the welcome tidings, knowing the wealth and the power of Messer Timbreo, took no counsel with either his kindred or his friends, but showed with gracious words how greatly he prized the alliance of his house with the cavaliere. Then returning to his dwelling he recounted to his wife and daughter the promise he had made. This Fenicia heard with exceeding joy, and with devout heart she gave thanks to God who had brought her pure love to so glorious an issue. And she was of glad countenance.

Yet Fortune, who never ceases to hinder the good of men, found a new means whereby the marriage all desired should be frustrated. It happened on this wise.

It was rumoured throughout Messina that in the space of a few days Signor Timbreo Cardona should espouse Fenicia, the daughter of Messer Lionato, the which pleased all the citizens, for Messer Lionato was dear to them. They held him as a man who sought to injure none, but to all did what pleasure he was able, and they manifested openly their delight in this his good fortune.

But in Messina there was another cavaliere; he was young and of noble blood, Signor Girondo Olerio Valentiano by name. He was one of the most magnanimous and illustrious soldiers at the king's court, and had shown himself valorous in battle. This rumour displeased him beyond measure, because but a little time before Fenicia's beauty had kindled his love for her, and so overmastering was his passion that he thought he should verily die if he could not win her for his wife, and was resolved to ask her father to

bestow her upon him. When he heard of the contract made with Signor Timbreo he was ready to swoon with grief of heart, and finding no remedy for his ill, he became possessed, as it were, with frenzy, and vanquished by passion let himself be carried away to do that which was not only contrary both to his birth and knighthood, but which would in any man have been infamous. In all enterprises he had been Signor Timbreo's companion in arms, and each had loved the other as if he were his brother. But in this matter, whatever might have been the cause, they had neither the one nor the other spoken of their love for Fenicia.

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Signor Gironde now became resolute to sow such discord between Signor Timbreo and Fenicia that the promise of marriage should be broken between them; then, such was his hope, he would himself obtain her for his wife. Nor did he wait to work out his folly. He found a man who would obey the demands of his blind and unbridled passion, and to him he opened his mind.

Now the confidant whom Signor Gironde had chosen as the minister of his villany was a youth of the court, a man of ill nurture, who took more pleasure in evil than in good. He being fully instructed of the plot he was to execute, went forth the next day to find Signor Timbreo. Signor Timbreo was taking his pleasure in the garden of the inn where he had his lodging. The youth being come to the place, Signor Timbreo, seeing him approach, courteously received him. There, after the customary salutations, the youth spoke after this manner:

"Signor mine, I am come at this hour to speak with you of things of great import concerning your honour and profit. And as peradventure I may say that which may offend, I pray you pardon it to me, and excuse this my service, be-

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lieving that I am moved thereto for a good end. For this I know well that what I am about to say will be to your profit to hear, if indeed you be the honourable cavaliere you have ever been held to be. But to pass onward to the truth of the matter. Yesterday I heard how you were agreed with Messer Lionato di Lionati to espouse Fenicia his daughter. Signor mine, beware of that you are about to do, and give regard to your honour. For this I tell you, a youth, my friend, already holds her for his love. And this very evening (I, as at other such times, being his companion) her lover goes to visit her. If you so will to pledge your word to offer offence neither to him nor to me, you shall yourself witness all. Moreover, you must know it is many months since he won her love. The service I owe to you, the many favours you have rendered me, have compelled me to disclose this to you. To you it now remains to do what you deem best; to me it suffices to have discharged my obligations towards you."

These words left Signor Timbreo as it were dazed and transported out of himself. For a little space he stood revolving many things in his mind. Then bitterness and—as to him seemed just—indignation prevailed over his loyal love and service to Fenicia. And sighing, he said:

"My friend, to you are due, and to you I give, eternal thanks, seeing this your devotion to my honour and to me. One day I will make manifest the gratitude I owe, at the time when I know how to return the great service you have done to me. And as you voluntarily offer to make me a witness of what I would not have imagined to myself, I pray you, by that charity which prompts you thus to aid me, go securely in your friend's company. I pledge my faith as a true knight neither to injure you nor him. Moreover, his

secret I will keep concealed that he may enjoy her love in peace. For I should have advised myself better at the first, and learnt to use my eyes diligently to search how all things stood.”

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Then said the youth to Signor Timbreo :

“ This night, signor, at the third hour, come to the house of Messer Lionato, and amongst those ruins that overlook his garden set yourself to watch. Opposite is that frontage of his palazzo where was once an old banquet-hall. The windows there stand open day and night. At that hour Fenicia may there be seen, for from them she can best enjoy the beauty of the garden. But Messer Lionato and his household dwell in the other part of the building, the palace being very old and very spacious, and fit to contain not the retinue of a gentleman but the court of a princee.”

The plot thus made, the lying youth departed, and seeking Gironde the traitor, told what he had contrived. Whereat Signor Gironde was very glad, it seeming to him that his design would readily be accomplished.

When the hour was come, the youth arrayed one of his servants in rich attire, and having perfumed him, instructed him how to act ; then they two went forth together, and another serving-man followed them bearing a ladder upon his shoulders.

Meantime Signor Timbreo—all too credulous and by Fortune most unbefriended—blinded by his jealousy, that day had partaken of little or no food, and whosoever had beheld him would have deemed him rather as one dead than living. Some half-hour before the time appointed he set forth to find a lurking-place amongst the ruins from whence he could see what might befall. To him it seemed a thing incredible that Fenicia should have given her love to another.

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Reasoning with himself, now accusing, now acquitting her, he bethought him that girlhood is light and unstable, scorning good and loving novelty, and thus holding parley in his mind, he kept close watch.

The night was not very dark, but it was very still. Then, hearkening, he heard the footfall of those who were approaching, and, although imperfectly, the sound of some few words. Presently he saw the three men pass by. The youth he knew well, but he could not descry the features of the other two. As they went, the one who was dressed as the lover said to the servant with the ladder :

“ See that thou placest the ladder quietly, lest my Fenicia say thou hast made too great a noise. Do all dexterously and with silence.”

This was heard clearly by Signor Timbreo, and in his heart the words pierced like a sharp point. And although he was alone and unarmed, save for his sword, and that they besides swords bore spears, and were moreover, it might be, fully harnessed, jealousy so stung him, and so great was his wrath, that he was near leaving his ambush to assail them. So doing he would slay him whom he took for Fenicia's lover, or being slain put a brief end to the misery he endured. Yet, remembering his plighted word, and esteeming it villany to attack those who held the security of his promise, he refrained, and full of anger and fury, fretted and gnawed with rage, waited what should come.

The three men having reached a window in that part of the building, leant the ladder softly against the balcony, and he who personated the lover mounting it, entered within as one secure and confident. When the unhappy Signor Timbreo saw this, believing firmly that he who had climbed up was keeping tryst with Fenicia, he was about to swoon for grief

of heart. Yet so strong was his just indignation, that jealousy itself was vanquished, and the fervent and sincere love he had borne Fenicia was not only extinguished but was changed to cruel hate.

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Then, not desirous to await his rival's return, Signor Timbreo betook himself from where he lay hidden, back to his inn. The youth saw him depart and plainly recognized and understood how things stood with him. Therefore he gave a signal not long after, and his servant came down, and they all returned together to the house of Signor Girondo. He having heard all rejoiced exceedingly, and already held himself as the possessor of fair Fenicia.

The remainder of that night Signor Timbreo slept but little. Early next day he rose and sent for that citizen of Messina who had before carried his message to Fenicia's father, and laid upon him the service he required. He, being fully instructed by Signor Timbreo of his will and intention, and constrained by him, went, at the hour of the midday meal, to find Messer Lionato. In the dining chamber Messer Lionato was waiting; the innocent Fenicia was there also, in the company of her mother and two younger sisters, working on certain silk embroideries. Being come thither, and having been graciously saluted by Messer Lionato, he spoke thus:

"Messer Lionato, I am the bearer of a message from Signor Timbreo to you, to your wife, and to Fenicia."

"I bid you welcome," replied Messer Timbreo. "And what manner of message do you bring? Come, my wife, and thou, Fenicia, come and hear with me what Signor Timbreo would have us hear."

Then the messenger spoke on this wise:

"It is commonly said that ambassadors should suffer no

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reproach for the message they bear. I come by the will of others, and I sorrow beyond measure to bring news which to you shall be grievous. Signor Timbreo bids you and your wife provide yourselves with another son-in-law, for that he will not ally himself with you. And this for no shortcoming of yours ; you he holds good and true, but because with his own eyes he has witnessed of Fenicia that which, hearing, he would have held incredible, therefore he bids you look well to your own affairs. To thee, Fenicia, he says, the love he bore to you deserved no such guerdon as that thou hast bestowed upon it, and that as thou hast taken to thyself another lover, another husband shalt thou seek. With thee he has no more to do."

Hearing this shameful and bitter message, Fenicia remained as one dead ; so also was it with Messer Lionato and his wife. But soon, gathering himself together and taking breath—which first had failed him—Messer Lionato replied to the ambassador :

" Brother mine, from the first when you spoke to me of this marriage, I misdoubted me that Signor Timbreo would remain steadfast in his demand. For in that I knew and know well I am poor, and his equal I am not. Nevertheless, it seems to me that if he has repented him of his desire to wed my daughter, it should have sufficed him to say so, and not, as he has done, to lay the reproach of infamy upon her. It is true such things may be, but I know the manner of my daughter's nurturing. I know her thoughts and deeds, and God, the just judge, will one day make clear the truth."

With this answer the citizen departed, and Messer Lionato held his opinion that Signor Timbreo had repented him of the alliance, it seeming to him that thereby he

degraded and transgressed his high lineage. Messer Lionato was of ancient and noble birth, and he also was of high renown, but his riches were only those of an obscure gentleman, albeit tradition averred his ancestry had of old owned many castles and lands, and held wide lordship. But, as with many another race, they had fallen from their high estate in the civil wars and various changes and chances in the island. Thus it was that neither father nor child knowing aught of anything which could redound to their dishonour, he thought the cavaliere had taken their present poverty and fortune in disdain.

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Fenicia, for her part, whom great ill betided by reason of her exceeding grief and faintness of heart, felt herself accused by a great wrong. And frail and delicate, unused to the blows of adverse Fortune, she abandoned herself utterly, holding death dearer than life. And assailed by deep and poignant sorrow, she let herself go as one dead; she lost life's colour, and seemed rather the image of a marble statue than that of a living woman. So they laid her upon a bed; there, with hot cloths and other remedies, they recalled her scattered senses. And the physicians being summoned, the news spread throughout Messina that the daughter of Messer Lionato was sick unto death. At these tidings many of her kinswomen and friends came to visit the hapless Fenicia, and speaking one with another of her sore distress, they strove, according to their utmost endeavour, to solace her. And, as is customary amongst a multitude of women, many and various things were said of Fenicia's piteous state, and by all of them generally Signor Timbreo was blamed with sharp indignation.

They were, for the most part, gathered around the bed on which the sick girl lay. Hearing what they said, and

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seeing that for compassion they all wept, she took breath, and with a weak voice prayed them to be silent. Then she said wearily :

“Mothers and sisters mine, dry these your tears. They serve you not, and to me are fresh cause of grieving. From them comes no profit to my distress. It is the pleasure of God ; it becomes us to have patience. The sorrow that so bitterly oppresses me—which little by little is breaking the thread of life—is not because I am thus cast off. This alone would grieve me without end, but that which has pierced my life and wounded my heart beyond all remedy is the manner of my rejection. Had Signor Timbreo but said I did not please him for his wife all would have been well. But I know, he having refused me in this manner, through all the city I shall eternally be blamed for that sin which I do not say I had never committed, but of which the very thought has never found place within me. Nevertheless, henceforth all men shall point me out as though I were a woman of ill life. I have ever confessed, and do now confess, that for so great a baron I was no equal mate. Nor did my kindred in their poverty seek so highly to consort me. But for nobleness and ancient blood the Lionati are as the most noble and most ancient in all the island, being, as it is written in old records, descended from those noble Romans who lived before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, if I say that by reason of our poverty I was unworthy of the cavaliere, I say on this account, contrariwise, that he unworthily has rejected me. That I never thought of bestowing upon any other that which should belong only to my husband is clearly manifest. That I speak the truth, God—whose name he ever revered and praised—knows. Nor can any man

declare if the divine majesty in this mishap has not wrought
my salvation, lest that I, being wedded in so high an estate,
sinning by pride, might have disdained this thing and that,
and set smaller account of the goodness of God towards me.
Now may God work His pleasure with me, and grant that
my suffering may give place to my soul's health. Yet I
pray, with all my heart's devotion, that the eyes of Signor
Timbreo may be opened. Not that he should again take
me for his wife—for little by little I feel death steals upon
me—but that he, who held my faith so lightly, may know
with all the world that I never fell into that folly and
shame of which I, against all reason, am accused. So that
though I die disgraced, in time I may be acquitted. May
he live long in joy and peace with whomsoever God
destines, in my place, to be his wife. For me in a few
hours' space four ells of earth shall suffice for my needs.
My father, my mother, my friends and kindred, may have
this little consolation in their sorrow, that of this infamy
laid to my charge I am wholly innocent. Let them take
my faith to witness, which as an obedient child I offer—
having at this present hour no other testimony to tender.
For me it is enough that at the just tribunal of Christ I
shall be known guiltless. Thus to Him who gave it I sur-
render my soul, which, desiring to break its earthly prison,
towards Him takes its way.”

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Having thus spoken, the immensity of the pain that
encompassed her heart oppressed her so cruelly that she
knew not how to speak further. She began to lose the
power of utterance, and stammered broken words, of which
they could not catch the import. A cold sweat spread from
limb to limb, and crossing her hands she resigned herself to
die. The physicians, who were still at hand, unable in any-

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wise to obviate the cruel mishap, abandoned her for dead, saying the sharpness of sorrow had been so extreme that her heart was thereby broken.

Soon, in the arms of those few who remained beside her, Fenicia lay cold and pulseless, and they said of her that she had died. They recalled one of the physicians, who, finding that her pulses beat no more, said likewise that she was dead.

How many were the lamentations, the tears and sighs over her, all ye who are pitiful can believe! The poor and wretched father, the mother who wailed with dishevelled head, would have made stones weep, and the other women and all who were there made a miserable mourning.

Already five or six hours had gone by, and the next day was appointed for her burial. When the throng of women were gone, the mother, more dead than living, kept alone with her the wife of Messer Lionato's brother. These two, refusing the aid of any other person, had water brought and set upon the fire. Shutting the door upon themselves, they unfastened Fenicia's dress, and began to bathe her with the warm water. For nearly seven hours Fenicia's senses had been wandering. When the heat reached the cold members they resumed their functions. With manifest signs the girl showed she was yet living, and soon her eyes opened. Almost the mother and aunt had cried aloud for fear; then, taking courage, they felt her heart and found that it made some movement. Thereupon they were assured that she lived. So, with warm cloths and other means, silently, they wrought so well that Fenicia revived, and opening her eyes widely, said:

"Alas! where am I?"

"Dost thou not see thou art here, with me and thine

aunt? So deeply thou hadst swooned that we held thee for dead. But, thanks be to God, thou livest.”

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“Ah me! better were it,” answered Fenicia, “that I were dead, and passed away out of so many troubles.”

“Daughter,” they said, “since it be God’s pleasure, thou must will to live, and all will be remedied.”

Then, concealing her joy, the mother opened the door of the room a little way, and called Messer Lionato, who came speedily. Who can question of his joy when he saw that his child lived? And many things he began to devise within himself. And first of all he would not have any hear aught of this matter, he being disposed to send Fenicia hence from Messina to the villa of his brother, whose wife was there present with them.

They revived Fenicia with delicate viands and costly wines, until strength and beauty came back to her. Then Messer Lionato sent for his brother, and disclosed to him fully that thing he had resolved should be done. This scheme they then arranged: Messer Girolamo (the brother of Messer Lionato was thus named) was to conduct Fenicia to his own house, and there keep her secretly in his wife’s company. So, having made provision at his villa for all that would be required, one morning early he sent his wife there with Fenicia, and a daughter of his, and a sister of Fenicia’s, who was thirteen or fourteen years old, Fenicia being sixteen. And this was done in order that Fenicia, as she became older and changed her outward semblance—as at that age it happens—they should be able in three or four years’ time to wed her under some new name.

Now, the day after the mishap had befallen her, the rumour spread throughout Messina that Fenicia was dead. And Messer Lionato, according to his rank, ordered the

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funeral. A coffin was made which, without anyone's knowledge (the mother of Fenicia wishing none to hinder), he filled no one knows with what, and he fastened the coffin, and he nailed it, and covered it with pitch. And everyone believed firmly it held the body of Fenicia. In the evening, dressed in black, Messer Lionato and his kindred followed the bier to the church; the father and mother showing as extreme a grief as though it were the true body of their daughter which they accompanied to the tomb. Whereby everyone was moved to pity, because the reason of her death being divulged, all the Messinese held for certain that the story of the cavaliere was feigned. The coffin was then interred, and for her the whole city mourned. Above they placed a stone whereon the arms of the Lionati were painted. And Messer Lionato made an epitaph to be thus written:

Fenicia was my name. Most innocent
I was accuséd with great cruelty
By him who held my faith. For unto me
Of his love-promise he did him repent.
My life was blameless. But, alas! he sent
Attainting it with shame, for all to see.
And I, lest shame should shame me utterly
With death, whom I desired, did me content.
No bare steel blade was needed for my dying.
Fierce grief my guiltless heart did more assail;
And the deep scorn of that base falsehood lying
Upon my head, than steel did more avail.
Only, Lord Christ, when I am dead, I sue
Make him, my lord, and all, know I was true.

When the melancholy rites had been duly performed, the cause of Fenicia's death being everywhere spoken of, and her piteous mishap being regarded as occasioned by a feigned accusation, Signor Timbreo began to feel most

sorrowful, and was oppressed beyond measure in his heart. To him it seemed that he was blameless, having seen the ladder climbed and the house entered. Yet, thinking more upon what he had witnessed, his rage having abated and reason opening his eyes, he began to consider that perhaps he who had entered had sought some other than Fenicia, or that as a robber he had climbed in. He recalled to himself that the house of Messer Lionato was very large, and that no one dwelt in that portion of it. Moreover, that it could not have been possible for Fenicia, sleeping in company with her sisters in an inner room of her father and mother's chamber, to have passed her father's room on her way to that other wing of the building. So, with his thoughts at strife one with another, he was much troubled and found no manner of repose.

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So also it fell out with Signor Girondo, who, hearing the manner of Fenicia's death, knew clearly that he had been her executioner and murderer. And because he had greatly loved her, and likewise because of the scandal of which he had been the true cause, his heart could not hold itself for grief, and almost, as one whom despair conquers, he was fain twice or thrice to strike himself with his own dagger. Nor could he sleep nor eat, but as if distraught and possessed from hour to hour he went to and fro frantically and could find no ease nor rest.

At last, the seventh day of Fenicia's funeral being past, it seemed to him that unless he made known his villany to Signor Timbreo he could live no longer. And at noon, when each one sought his midday meal in his own dwelling, Girondo went towards the king's palace. Meeting with Signor Timbreo, who was upon his way from the court to his inn, Signor Girondo spoke thus to him :

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“Signor Timbreo, if it will not displease thee, come with me near by, to do me a service.”

Signor Timbreo, who had pleasure in his company, went with him accordingly, and they spoke together of many things.

After they had gone a little way they came to the church in which was the supposed tomb of Fenicia. Being arrived there, Signor Girondo commanded his servants that none of them should enter the church. He also prayed Signor Timbreo to command his likewise to remain without. This he did instantly. Then the two entered alone into the church, which was empty, and Signor Girondo took his way to the chapel where Fenicia's grave was, and thither he led Signor Timbreo. When they were come within the chapel, Girondo knelt down beside the tomb. He unsheathed a dagger he carried at his side, and gave it naked into Signor Timbreo's hand, who, full of wonder, awaited to learn what this should signify. Nor did he know whose was the tomb where his companion knelt.

Then, with many tears and sobs, he spoke thus to Signor Timbreo :

“Gentle and magnanimous cavaliere, I, by my own sentence condemned, having infinitely wronged thee, am not come hither to ask for pardon, for my fault deserves no forgiveness. But, if ever thou wouldst do a deed worthy thy valour, if ever thou desirest to act knightly-wise or to do that which shall be acceptable to God and well pleasing to man, pierce this traitorous and wretched breast with the steel thou holdest in thine hand, and with my evil and accursed blood do fit sacrifice to the innocent and unhappy Fenicia, who in this sepulchre lies entombed. For I maliciously made myself the cause of her all too early and all undeserved

death. And if thou art more pitiful of me than I am of myself, and thou deniest me this, I will with my own hands take the utmost vengeance I am able upon myself. But if thou art that loyal and true cavaliere which thou hast always been, who was never wont to suffer the least shadow of shame, take now due vengeance for thyself and for Fenicia together.”

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Then Signor Timbreo saw that this tomb was the grave where the body of fair Fenicia rested. And hearing the words of Signor Gironde he was as one who has lost his reason, seeing he knew not how to imagine what his companion meant. Yet, troubled by he knew not what, he began bitterly to weep. And he prayed Signor Gironde to rise to his feet, and tell him clearly that of which he spoke, and the dagger he cast far from him.

And he persuaded Signor Gironde until at length he stood up, and, weeping the while, thus made answer to him :

“ You must know, signor mine, that I loved Fenicia so well, that even were I to live on for fivescore years, never should I look to find solace or any comfort. Nevertheless, this my very love brought death to the defamed girl. For, seeing that I could win no single look of kindness, nor gain one smallest token of her grace, when the tidings came that she was promised to thee for thy wife, blinded by my passion, I thought within myself that if it were possible to find a means whereby thou mightest not wed her, I, hereafter, demanding her from her father, might myself espouse her.”

Thus with many more words Signor Gironde, weeping, recounted in what manner Signor Timbreo had been deceived, which hearing the cavaliere made great lamentation. But knowing that no man might undo that which had been,

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and that Fenicia, being dead, nought availed to restore her to life, he was minded to put bitterness aside, and pardoning Signor Girondo, to render to Fenicia's memory that fair fame and honour of which, living, she had with such great wrong been despoiled.

Therefore after this manner he spoke :

"How much better had it been for me, O my brother ! had I never been born, or that coming perforce into this world I had been born without hearing ! Then should I never have listened to those things which to me have been so grievous and have wrought to me so great hurt that all my joy is lost for ever ! For I, all too easy of belief, have slain her whose love merited some far other guerdon than shameful slander and an all too early death. Yet, since God has suffered this to be—against whose will no leaf stirs—and as it is easier to cancel than amend the past, no vengeance will I take. Thereby I should but count another loss, and add a grief to grief ; nor would Fenicia's fair soul thereby return to her pure body, whose course is run. With one thing only I will reproach thee, that thou mayst never again thus err. Thou shouldst have disclosed thy love to me, knowing that I knew it not. For I, being victor over myself, as generous souls are ever victors, would in this enterprise have given place to thee, and the love of friend to friend should have supplanted the love of lovers. Or it might be that thou thyself wouldst have withdrawn thee from thy quest, and all had been well. But now what is done is done, and for the undoing thereof nothing shall avail. Yet, in one thing I desire that thou wouldst do my pleasure."

"Command what thou wilt, signor mine," said Signor Girondo, "and all shall be accomplished according to thy word."

"I desire," answered Signor Timbreo, "that Fenicia, being by our fault falsely accused, may be, by as much as in us lies, declared innocent of all dishonour. And this, first to her disconsolate parents, and then to all the people of Messina. Otherwise before my eyes will rise for ever the shadow of her wrathful soul, crying continually to God for vengeance upon me."

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To this, still weeping, Signor Girondo quickly replied :

"To thee it belongs to command, to me to obey. First united by friendship's bond, now by the wrong I have done thee, and by the pardon thou as a true and pitiful knight hast courteously granted to me, I am for ever bondsman of thy grace."

And when they had spoken these words they knelt them down humbly beside the tomb, with hands folded crosswise upon their breasts, and craved pardon of Fenicia and of God, the one for his great villany, the other for his little faith.

Then they left weeping, and they went to the house of Messer Lionato. He, hearing that these two gentlemen desired to speak with him, marvelled greatly, and he arose and went forth to meet them and saluted them, bidding them welcome.

Seeing Messer Lionato and the mother of Fenicia clad in black apparel, their voices failed them with grief for the cruel remembrance of her death. And seats being brought, Signor Timbreo, before all who were there assembled, narrated truly the story of Fenicia's dolorous betrayal. And with Signor Girondo he knelt him down, and besought her father and her mother to pardon them for that villainous deed.

Whereto Messer Lionato, with tears of joy, lovingly

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embraced them, and forgave them all, giving thanks to God who thus had made manifest the innocence of Fenicia.

Then Signor Timbreo, turning to Messer Lionato, said :

“ Signor my father, since evil fate has not willed that I should wed your child, I pray you, and so far as I may would constrain you, that you would deal with me, and with all that is mine, as though I were indeed your son. For henceforth I shall ever hold you in that reverence and render to you that obedience that is due to a beloved father. And if you will graciously command me, you will know my deeds shall be in accord with this my promise. Nor shall anything be so difficult but that at your bidding I will strive to accomplish it.”

To this Messer Lionato replied with loving words, and then he said :

“ As of your courtesy you make such proffer, one grace I will make bold to ask. I entreat you, by that loyalty and by that love you bore to that same poor child of mine, that at that time when you desire to take to yourself a wife, you will tell me thereof, and that it will please you to take her whom I shall choose for you to wed, and none other.”

To Signor Timbreo this seemed but a small reparation for so great an offence, and taking Messer Lionato's hand and kissing him, he answered :

“ Signor my father, it is but a light thing you entreat of me, on whom rests the burden of so great a debt. Yet that you may know how my desire is to please you, before all these here present I promise, not alone that I will not wed me without your knowledge, but that I will wed her solely whom you shall bid me take for my wife.”

And Signor Girondo having likewise made proffer of service to Messer Lionato, the two departed, and throughout

Messina the tidings were spread that Fenicia was plainly acquitted of all dishonour. Moreover, that same day, a messenger, sent by her father, brought Fenicia word of what had happened. Wherefore she made marvellous rejoicings and devoutly gave thanks to God in that she was declared guiltless. The Refusal of Fenicia.

Now a year had passed since Fenicia had dwelt at the house of Messer Lionato's brother, and they had dealt so well that it was known to none that she was still living. Moreover, in this time Fenicia, being now seventeen years of age, had become beautiful beyond all belief, and was in such manner grown to womanhood that none who looked upon her would have known that she was that Fenicia whom they took for dead. And her sister, who dwelt with her, who was fifteen, and was called Belfiore, seemed indeed a flower of all fairness, only less fair than Fenicia herself. Which being perceived by Messer Lionato, who visited them often, he resolved with no further delay to execute his determination, and having told Fenicia of his purpose, he said one day, smiling, to Signor Timbreo :

"The time is now come, signor mine, when, by your favour, you shall fulfil the promise by which you have bound yourself to me. It seems to me that I have found a wife for you, both gentle and very fair, who, according to my opinion, when you have seen, shall greatly please you. And though haply you may not bear her that same love you bore Fenicia, yet in espousing her you will espouse no less beauty, gentleness, and grace. Yet, seeing her, it shall be yours to do what is good in your own eyes. On Sunday morning, I, with a company of friends and kinsmen, will come to you at the inn where you are lodged, and you, with Signor Girondo, being in readiness, we will together ride forth from Messina the space of some

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three miles, where is a villa. And near by the villa is a chapel. There we will hear mass, and presently you shall be brought to the presence of her of whom I speak; and afterwards, with your good will, we will feast together."

And Signor Timbreo being agreed, thus it was done. And the day being come they rode forth, and having heard mass at a church which was there, they went to the villa belonging to the brother of Messer Lionato. Where, when they were assembled in a fair hall, hung with Alexandrian arras and richly tapestried, there came to them many gentle ladies. Amongst these were Fenicia and Belfiore. And Fenicia was fair as the moon when it shines amidst a heaven of stars. She was clothed in a vesture of finest silk of Damascus, white as very snow, with certain ornaments upon her head. And she was tall and round of limb, albeit she had not yet attained the full stature of womanhood. And the hue of her face was a clear whiteness, bespread now less, now more, as she was moved thereto, with scarlet and rose colour. And her arms were of just proportion, and her hands very fair. Upon her brow her hair lay like threads of pale gold stirred by every little wind that came and went. In her eyes, which shone, Love himself lay harboured. Nor was Belfiore less fair, although, being so young in years, some grace of fuller womanhood yet lacked.

Thus, all being present, Messer Lionato took Signor Timbreo by the hand, and led him to Fenicia, saying:

"Here, signor cavaliere, is the Signora Lucilla" (so Fenicia was called), "whom I have chosen, if it so please you, to give to you for your wedded wife. Nevertheless, you are wholly at liberty to take her or refuse."

Signor Timbreo, seeing the girl, who was in very truth of marvellous beauty, said:

“Signor my father, she whom you have chosen is of royal aspect. But not only her, but any wife whom you were pleased to give me, I would wed obediently, she being willing thereto.”

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To these words the girl made answer :

“Signor cavaliere, to do the bidding of Messer Lionato I am come here.”

“And I,” said Messer Lionato, “pray you that you will take Signor Timbreo as your husband.”

Then, that the matter might be no longer delayed, a priest was bidden, who with the words and rites of holy church forthwith espoused the two.

And Signor Timbreo, who, from her first coming into the hall, had felt his heart stirred, deeming that in Lucilla’s face he discerned some semblance of Fenicia’s features, could not content himself with enough beholding her. So that the old love he had borne to Fenicia seemed requickened within him and turned to this new bride.

Then being seated at the marriage feast, when those fruits were brought the season of the year afforded, the banquet had drawn to an end—Messer Lionato’s sister, who was seated beside Signor Timbreo, asked him lightly (as though she knew nought of what had been) :

“Signor bridegroom, had you then never taken to yourself any other wife ?”

At this demand the eyes of the cavaliere became filled with tears, nor until they had fallen could he make any reply. But restraining himself at length he answered thus :

“Signora mine, your question brings to my mind that grief which I ever carry in my heart. And in despite of this my lady, whom I hold full dear, for sake of one whom living I loved and whom dead I love, the snake of an old sorrow is

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wound about my heart, and continually it wounds and stings me very sorely, for in that I myself was sole cause of her bitter dying."

At these words Signor Girondo was fain to make some reply, but for weeping utterance failed him. Yet at the last with broken speech he said :

"Nay, it was I in my disloyalty who was the author and minister of her death."

Hearing of what they spoke, for sad remembrance of that past pain she had suffered so grievously, a rain of tears came to Fenicia's eyes, but the lady still continued her questionings, saying :

"Ah, signor cavaliere, tell me, I pray you, of your courtesy, how this befell."

"Alas! signora," answered Signor Timbreo, "that which to me is eternal grief, and small honour, I will narrate."

And from the beginning to the end he told all that miserable tale. And all those who heard it were filled with compassion and great astonishment.

When he had finished, the lady said :

"Cruel and wonderful indeed, signor cavaliere, is the story you have related. But say further. If, before you had taken another wife, it had been possible to recall your dead Fenicia to life, what would you have adventured to win her back?"

"I swear to God," answered Signor Timbreo, "though this my wife is dear to me, and shall be every day dearer, had it been possible to recall my dead love, I would have given the half of my life and all my life's treasure, so that I might have seen her face once more. For as much as any man has in him to love woman, I truly did love her. And if I were to live a thousand thousand years, still I would love my

dead love. And for her sake to this her kindred I do reverence.”

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Then Messer Lionato could no longer contain his joy.

“Fenicia sits beside you,” he said. “And it is she herself, your love, whom you have to-day espoused. Where is your love fled? Is she so changed in form and feature that thus looking upon her you know her not?”

At those words the blind eyes of the cavaliere were straightway opened, and taking her in his arms a thousand times he kissed her, and his gladness was infinite. Forthwith arose Signor Girondo, and weeping, craved humbly pardon at her feet; to whom she with gentle words gave full forgiveness of those her past wrongs.

Then Signor Girondo, turning himself to Messer Lionato, prayed that he would grant to him a petition he was about to make, which favour would greatly and marvellously content him.

Messer Lionato bade him speak on, for that whatsoever was in his power to grant he would willingly accord.

“And I,” continued Signor Girondo, “ask of you the Signora Belfiore for my wedded and well-loved wife.”

Her father, hearing, rejoiced anew, and almost he was beside himself at so much unlooked-for gladness, nor did he know if what he heard and saw were true, or but a fleeting dream. Yet, seeing that he was well awake, he gave thanks with all his heart to God, who had thus rewarded him above his merits, and calling Belfiore: “Thou seest, daughter mine,” he said, “how this matter stands. This signor cavaliere seeks thee for his wife. If thou art willing, I am beyond measure content it should be so. Yet say freely if it pleaseth thee.”

The girl, trembling and shamefaced, replied that she was in

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this and all things ready to obey him. Wherefore Signor Girondo, in the presence of all there, espoused her with due rites, and gave her the ring of betrothal. And in rejoicings and feastings and dancing they passed the day.

And the next morning being come they prepared to return to Messina, there publicly, and with the splendour appertaining to their rank, to celebrate their nuptials. Which being done, and the story being made known to the king, he enriched them with many and great gifts. Thus it fell out with the true love of Signor Timbreo, and the ill deed of Signor Girondo was thus turned into good, and both lived long in joy and felicity with those their fair and dear ladies.



